The FLYING MACHINE BOYS In the WILDS

BY FRANK WALTON

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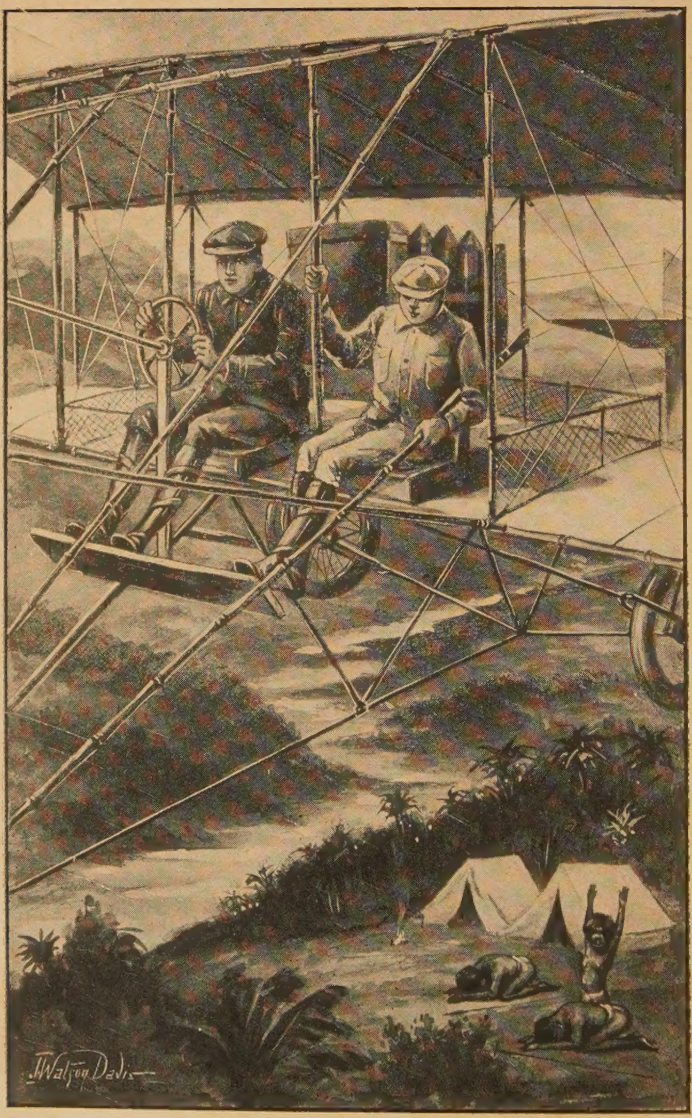


The boys were certain that if they could have looked down upon the savages they would have seen them on their knees.

The Flying Machine Boys In the Wilds

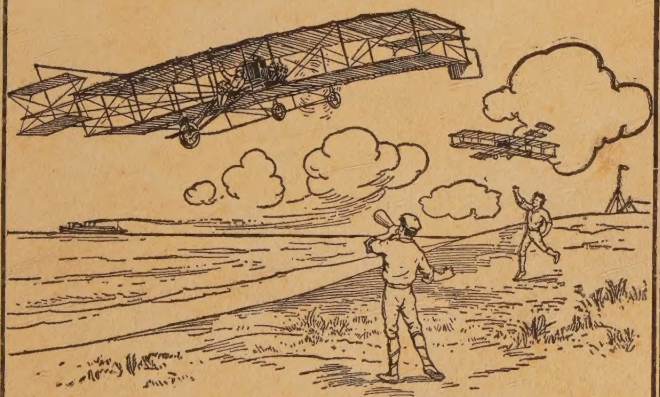
OR

The Mystery of the Andes

By FRANK WALTON

AUTHOR OF

"The Flying Machine Boys on Secret Service"
"The Flying Machine Boys on Duty"
"The Flying Machine Boys in Mexico"



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THE FLYING MACHINE BOYS IN THE WILDS

THE FLYING MACHINE BOYS IN THE WILDS.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE EQUATOR.

THE Flying Machine Boys were camping under the equator. The *Louise* and the *Bertha,* the splendid aeroplanes in which the lads had visited California and Mexico, lay on a great plateau some fifteen thousand feet above the level of the Pacific ocean, and two thin tents of light oiled-silk stood not far away.

Ben Whitcomb and Jimmie Stuart sat at the entrance of one of the tents shivering with cold, while Glenn Richards and Carl Nichols, in the interest of increased warmth, chased each other around a miserable little apology for a fire which alternately blazed and smoldered near the aeroplanes.

"I begin to understand now how those who freeze to death must suffer!" declared Ben, his teeth chattering like the "bones" of an end-man in a minstrel show.

"You give me a pain!" grinned Jimmie. "Here we are almost exactly under the equator, and yet you talk of being cold!"

The boy's lips were blue and he swung his arms about his body in the hope of getting a livelier circulation of blood as he spoke.

"Under the equator!" scoffed Ben. "Better say 'under the Arctic circle!' What are we camping here for, anyway?" he added impatiently, springing to his feet. "Why not drop down into a region where the equator isn't covered with ice a foot thick?"

"You wanted to pass a night up here!" laughed Carl, stopping in front of the two boys, his eyes dancing with mischief, his cheeks flushed from exercise. "You told us how you wanted to breathe the cool, sweet air of the hills! Now breathe it!"

"The cool, sweet air of the hills," Ben retorted, "reminds me of the atmosphere of the big refrigerator at home."

Glenn Richards now joined the little group and stood laughing at the disgusted expression on the face of his chum.

"Didn't I tell you," he exclaimed, "that Ecuador is the land of contradictions? When you come here, you bring a peck or two of quinine tablets, a bundle or two of mosquito netting, and a couple of bales of fans. You bring your summer clothing, and don't expect to wear much of that. Then yo..

go on a trip up-country and freeze to death where the ice is about nine thousand feet thick!"

"I know where all the heat goes!" Jimmie declared. "It pours out of those big peaks you see off there. How do you suppose the earth is going to keep any warmth in it when it is all running out at volcanoes?"

The boys were, perhaps, twenty miles north of Quito, almost exactly under the equator. From the plateau on which they were encamped several ancient volcanoes were in plain view.

"Huh! I guess the volcanoes we see are about burned out!" Carl declared. "At any rate, I don't hear of their filling in any valleys with lava."

"I guess about all they do now is to smoke," Ben suggested.

"And that's a bad habit, too!" Glenn Richards grinned.

"Now, I'll tell you what we'd better do, boys," Glenn said, after glancing disapprovingly at the small fire. "We'd better hop on the machines and drop down about ten thousand feet. I've got enough of this high mountain business."

"All right!" Jimmie returned. "You know what you said about wanting experiences which were out of the way. If you think you've got one here, we'll slide down to the green grass."

It was late in November and the hot, dry season of the South American continent was on. Far be-

low the boys could see the dark green of luxuriant vegetation, while all around them lay the bare brown peaks of lofty plateaus and lifting mountain cones.

As it was somewhere near the middle of the afternoon, the boys lost no time in packing their camp equipage and provisions on the aeroplanes. In order to find a suitable place for a camp lower down they might be obliged to traverse considerable country.

In describing this part of the continent a traveler once crumpled a sheet of paper in his hand and tossed it on the table, saying to a friend as he did so that that was an outline map of the northern part of South America. There were many gorges and plateaus, but only a few spots where aeroplanes might land with safety.

After quite a long flight, during which the machines soared around cliffs and slid into valleys and gorges, the boys found a green valley watered by the Esmeraldas river. Here they dropped down, and the shelter-tents were soon ready for occupancy.

"I suppose," Carl grumbled as provisions were taken from the flying machines and brought to the vicinity of the fire, "that we'll have to fight thousands of kinds of crawling and creeping things before morning!"

"Well," Jimmie laughed, "you wouldn't stay up there where the flying and creeping things don't live!"

"My private opinion," declared Glenn, "is that we ought to spend most of our time in the air! I wish we could sleep on the machines!"

"Where are we going, anyhow?" demanded Jimmie.

"We're going to follow the backbone of the South American continent clear to Cape Horn!" replied Ben. "That is, if our flying machines and our tempers hold out!"

"I have an idea," Glenn said, "that we'll spend most of the time in Peru, which is probably the oldest country in the world so far as civilization is concerned."

"That's another dream!" exclaimed Carl.

"Look here," Glenn exclaimed, "there are still temples and palaces in Peru which date back beyond the remotest reach of tradition. The earliest Incas believed that many of the fortresses, castles and temples which they found there were formed by the gods when the world was made."

"That's going back a long ways!" laughed Jimmie.

"There's a lake in Peru called Titicaca on an island in the middle of which lies an ancient palace and many other structures," Glenn went on. "Gathered about it are the remains of a civilization that was old when the people of Europe consisted of a group of semi-heathen tribes wandering from place to place. There are palaces surpassing any-

thing to be seen on the Rhine, and castles which had fallen into decay before civilization began at the mouth of the Nile."

"Go to it!" laughed Carl. "Make it good and old while you're about it!"

"On the island of Titicaca," continued Glenn, "are marvels in architecture which make the wonders of Egypt look like thirty cents! There are massive fortifications perched on the sides of almost perpendicular cliffs, and even to-day there are large stones carefully balanced on the verge of precipices, ready to be pushed off at a moment's notice and sent crashing down on the legions of an attacking foe."

"Those old fellows must have been fighters!" commented Ben.

"They were fighters, all right!" Glenn went on. "They ruled all that part of the world until the Spaniards came. They were very superstitious, the sun being an object of worship. The Temple of the Sun, on the island of Titicaca, was one of the most magnificent structures ever erected. Outside and inside the walls were lined with gold and precious stones. The temple was the pride of the Incas, but it was stripped of its rich covering by the Spaniards. The walls were torn down and rifled, and the sacred sun was seized and gambled for by the covetous invaders. Nothing that could be converted into money was overlooked. And since

that time the Incas have become one of the lowest races on the face of the earth."

"I suppose we shall be able to inspect a lot of these old temples?" asked Carl.

"Undoubtedly!" Glenn answered. "Some of them are deserted; some are occupied by native Indians, and some are said to be frequented by the spirits of those who erected them."

"Gee! That sounds good to me!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"A haunted temple might help some!" Carl exclaimed.

"There really is a temple down on Lake Titicaca!" declared Glenn, "which even Europeans declare to be inhabited by the Evil One."

"That's where I'm headed for!" declared Jimmie. "Any old time you show me a mystery you'll see me on the job!"

"There's a mystery there, all right!" Glenn insisted. "The temple stands on a winding arm of the lake, and is entirely surrounded by broken country. So difficult is it of access that for years no one attempted to visit it. Then, a few years ago, a party of Englishmen made their way to the ruins and found themselves in an atmosphere of mystery almost resembling magic."

"What did they see?" asked Ben.

"I don't remember exactly what they all saw," Glenn answered. "Their stories do not agree!

Some saw figures in white—the long flowing robes of priests—some saw strange lights suspended in the air; some heard the most mournful and terrifying sounds."

"And these Englishmen were supposed to be people of average intelligence?" asked Ben.

"There were scientists in the party!" was the reply.

"There is no such word as ghost in the dictionary of the scientist!" laughed Carl.

"Following the stories told by the visitors," Glenn went on, "a number of people visited the vicinity of the temple, and all came away with tales more vivid and more imaginative than those of the scientists. For two years now the place has been left entirely alone."

"We might go there and camp!" suggested Carl.

"I move we take a look at it!" Jimmie cut in. "We can fly down on the roof and get away before the goblins get us."

"I'm game for anything you boys decide on," Glenn declared, but my private opinion is that it will be only a waste of time for us to pay much attention to the haunted temple!"

"The ghosts wouldn't like us if we should leave their country without making a formal call!" laughed Carl.

"Who's going to get supper?" asked Jimmie in a

moment. "I feel like I could eat one of the wild beasts which are said to flourish in this region!"

"There isn't much supper to get!" replied Ben, with a laugh. "All we have is a couple of pounds of ham, a few eggs, and a lot of tinned provisions. There's the river down there. Why don't one of you boys go and catch a fish?"

"Aw, I don't believe there's any fish in that river!" grinned Jimmie. "If there are fish there, they'll be tough eating for they must be acrobats!"

"Why acrobats?" asked Glenn.

"Because they must stand on their heads and turn handsprings in order to get something to eat in that swift water!"

"I believe we can get a fish for supper, just the same!" insisted Carl, "and I'm going to get out a line and an imitation minnow and go try!"

"May the luck of the hungry fisherman go with you!" laughed Ben.

"He'll have better company than that!" Jimmie grinned. "I'm going along myself!"

While Glenn and Ben arranged the camp for the night Jimmie and Carl started away down the slope leading to the river. Directly in front of the tents the bank was clear of undergrowth, and covered with grass almost waist high. Lower down, however, to the west, was a great thicket which seemed to extend for miles. The opposite shore of the stream was heavily wooded for some distance up.

Above, the timber line showed the bare, brown slopes of mountains.

When the two boys reached the bank of the stream the prospects were not attractive, the water being broken into rapids and falls by jagged rocks which occupied the bed of the river at this point. To the west, however, where the stream entered the forest, the surface of the water appeared to be unbroken, so the lads made their way in that direction. In a few minutes their lines were out and almost instantly sharp twitches at the hooks informed the boys that they were not fishing in barren waters.

But before the first fish was landed an exciting interruption occurred.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE FISHERMEN CAUGHT.

SEATED with his back to the thicket, Jimmie heard a rustle and turned about expecting to see one of his chums.

Instead, he saw the ugly, vicious face of an Ecuadorian savage. While he looked, the fellow was joined by another, equally repulsive and equally naked. During that first moment of amazement Jimmie dropped his fish pole and it went bobbing down the river.

"Carl!" he said, in a low whisper,

The boy shouted back from lower down the stream.

"Got a fish?"

"Come up and see!" cried Jimmie.

Carl came panting through the undergrowth, and Jimmie pointed with a hand which was not quite steady at the two figures in the underbrush just back of him.

"Look what I've found!" he whispered.

"Did you call me up to give me my share?"

asked Carl. "If you did, I don't want it! You're welcome to everything you find in that line!"

"Gee!" Jimmie exclaimed. "I wish we were back by the machines!"

"I wish so, too!" Carl put in. "I wonder why they stand there looking at us in that way."

"Maybe they're out after supper, too!" remarked Jimmie.

"Do they eat folks?" asked Carl.

"The savages who come over from the Amazon valley eat folks," Jimmie answered, "and those fellows look as if they came from that neighborhood."

"Let's start on up toward camp and see if they will interfere!" suggested Carl.

"Have you got a gun with you?" asked Jimmie.

"Of course not!" was the reply. "I didn't come out to shoot fish!"

"And I left mine at the camp, too!" Jimmie complained. "I'll never do it again!"

"Well, let's make a start and see what comes of it!" suggested Carl.

As the boys moved away the savages, men of medium height but apparently very strong and supple, lifted naked arms in gestures which commanded them to remain where they were.

"I wonder if they've got guns?" questioned Jimmie.

"They've got little short spears!" answered Carl. "I saw one in that fellow's hand."

"And I suppose they're poisoned, too!" Jimmie asserted.

The two savages now advanced from the thicket and stood threateningly before the two boys. Except for breech-clouts, which seemed to be woven of some sort of fiber, the men were naked. In color they were almost as dark as the negro of Africa. Their features seemed to be a cross between the tribes of Asia and Africa. They were armed with short spears which they flourished with many hostile gestures.

"Good-evening!" Jimmie said.

The savages conversed together in a dialect which seemed to the boys to resemble a confidential conversation between two hogs, and then pointed down the river.

"Here's where we get abducted!" Carl exclaimed.

"You needn't get funny about it!" Jimmie expostulated. "This is no joke!"

"Anyhow," Carl went on, "the ginks don't know anything about good manners. They never answered your salutation!"

The savages were still uttering what appeared to be wordless commands, and, as they continued to point down the river, very reluctantly the boys started in that direction.

"I wonder if the brutes have captured the camp, too?" queried Jimmie.

"Oh, I suppose so!" Carl answered. "These fellows travel in droves, like wild hogs, and I guess we lit right in the middle of a large tribe."

In spite of the impatience expressed by the gestures of their captors, the boys proceeded very slowly. As they walked they listened for some indication of trouble at the camp. They knew that Glenn and Ben were well armed, and that they would not submit to capture without first putting up a spirited defence.

"We haven't heard any shooting yet," Jimmie said in a moment.

"I don't believe there's any use of our being lugged off in this style!" Carl advised. "We ought to be able to break away from these brutes and get back to camp. The boys there are all right up to this time, for we haven't heard any fighting, and the four of us ought to be able to induce the entire savages to beat it!"

"If we can only get back to the flying machine," Jimmie suggested, "we can get away, all right. I believe these fellows would drop dead if they saw the *Louise* or the *Bertha* slanting up into the air!"

"Well, then, let's make a break!" Carl advised.

"All right!" Jimmie replied. "When we reach the next jungle where the bushes are so thick that they can't throw a spear very far, you duck one way

I'll duck the other, and we'll both make for the camp."

The boys knew very well that they were in a perilous situation. The savages were more familiar with travel through underbrush than themselves. Besides, they would undoubtedly be able to make better time than boys reared on city streets. In addition to all this, the spears they carried might carry death on every tip.

However, to remain seemed fully as dangerous as to attempt to escape. So when they came to a particularly dense bit of jungle the boys darted away. As they did so Jimmie felt a spear whiz within an inch of his head, and Carl felt the push of one as it entered his sleeve. Dodging swiftly this way and that, uttering cries designed to bring their chums to their assistance, the boys forced their [illegible] through the undergrowth some distance in advance of their pursuers.

[illegible]very moment they expected to feel the sting of [illegible]r, or to be seized from behind by a brown, [illegible]cular hand. After all it was their voices and not their ability as runners which brought about their rescue.

[illegible]ring the cries of their chums, Ben and Glenn [illegible]ng for their guns and, walking swiftly toward [illegible]river, began firing, both for the purpose of [illegible]cting the boys toward the camp and with the [illegible]d purpose of frightening away any hostile

element, either human or animal, walking on four legs or on two. Panting, and scarcely believing in their own good fortune, Jimmie and Carl presently came to where their chums stood not far from the machines. Both boys dropped down in the long grass the instant they felt themselves under the protection of the automatics in the hands of their friends.

To say that Glenn and Ben were surprised at the sudden appearance of their chums only feebly expresses the situation. The savages had not followed the boys into the open plaza where the grass grew, and so there was no physical explanation of the incident.

"What's doing?" demanded Glenn.

"You must be running for exercise!" Ben put in.

"For the love of Mike!" exclaimed Jimmie, panting and holding his hands to his sides. "Get back to the machines and throw the truck on board! These woods are full of head-hunters!"

"What did you see?" asked Ben.

"Savages!" answered Jimmie.

"They got us, too!" Carl put in.

"They did?" demanded Glenn. "Then how did you get away?"

"Ran away!" answered Jimmie scornfully. "You don't suppose we flew, do you? I guess we've been going some!"

"Where are the savages now?" demanded Glenn.

"I don't know!" Jimmie answered. "I don't want to know where they are. I want to know where they ain't!"

"Come on!" Carl urged. "Let's get back to the machines!"

Glenn and Ben did not seem to take the incident as seriously as did their chums. In fact, they were rather inclined to make facetious remarks about little boys being frightened at black men in the woods. Ben was even in favor of advancing into the thicket on a tour of investigation, but Jimmie argued him out of the idea.

"They're savages, all right!" the latter insisted. "They're naked, and they're armed with spears. Look to me like head-hunters from the Amazon valley! If you go into the thicket you're likely to get a couple of spears into your frame!"

"Then I won't go!" Ben grinned.

"Come on," urged Carl, "it's getting dark, so we'd better be getting back to camp! Perhaps the niggers have beaten us to it already!"

"I guess the two you saw are about the only ones in the vicinity," answered Glenn.

"You'd feel pretty cheap, wouldn't you, if you'd get back to camp and find that the savages had taken possession?" demanded Jimmie.

Thus urged, Glenn and Ben finally abandoned

the idea of advancing into the forest. Instead, they turned their faces toward the camp, and all four boys advanced with ever-increasing speed as they neared the spot where the aeroplanes and the tents had been left.

About the first thing they saw as they came within sight of the broad planes of the flying machines was a naked savage inspecting the motors. He stood like a statue before the machine for an instant and then glided away. They saw him turn about as he came to a cluster of underbrush, beckon silently to some one, apparently on the other side of the camp, and then disappear.

"And that means," Glenn whispered, "that the woods are full of 'em!"

"Oh, no," jeered Jimmie, "the two we saw are the only ones there are in the woods! I guess you'll think there is something in the story we told about being captured and abducted!"

The short tropical twilight had now entirely passed away. It seemed to the boys as if a curtain had been drawn between themselves and the tents and flying machines which had been so plainly in view a moment before. There was only the glimmer of the small camp-fire to direct them to their camp.

"Who's got a searchlight?" asked Glenn.

"I have!" replied Ben. "I never leave the camp without one!"

"Then use it!" advised Glenn, "and we will make for the machines."

"Don't you do it!" advised Jimmie. "They'll throw spears at us!"

"Well, we've got to have a light in order to get the machines away!" declared Carl. "Perhaps the niggers will run when they see the illumination. The light of a searchlight at a distance, you know, doesn't look like anything human or divine!"

It was finally decided to advance as cautiously and silently as possible to the camp and spring at once to the machines.

"We'll never be clear of these savages until we get up in the air!" declared Ben.

"But that will leave our tents and our provisions, and about everything we have except the machines, behind!" wailed Carl.

"It won't leave all the provisions behind!" declared Jimmie. "I'll snatch beans and bread if I get killed doing it!"

During their progress to the camp the boys neither saw nor heard anything whatever of the savages. They found the fire burning brightly and the provisions which had been set out for supper just as they had been left. The machines had not been molested. In fact, the statue-like savage they had observed examining the flying machine now seemed to have come out of a dream and retreated to his world of shadows again.

"Perhaps it won't be necessary to leave here to-night," Glenn suggested.

"I don't think it's safe to remain," Ben contended.

"You boys may stay if you want to!" Jimmie exclaimed. "But Carl and I have had enough of this neck of the woods. We'll take the *Louise* and fly over to Quito, and you can find us there when you get ready to move on. You boys certainly take the cake for not knowing what's good for you!" he added with a grin.

"Oh, well, perhaps we'd all better go!" Glenn advised. "I don't see anything nourishing in this part of the country, anyway. If you boys had only brought home a couple of fish it might have been different. I'm of the opinion that a square meal at Quito wouldn't come amiss just now."

"It's so blooming dark I don't know whether we can find the town or not," suggested Carl.

"Oh, we can find it all right!" insisted Ben.

"If the savages let us!" exclaimed Jimmie excitedly.

CHAPTER III.

A MASTERLY RETREAT.

"I DON'T see any savages!" replied Glenn.

"Can't you hear them?" demanded Jimmie.

"I think I can smell something!" Carl exclaimed.

"Don't get gay, now!" Jimmie answered. "This is no funny business! If you'll listen, you'll hear the snakes creeping through the grass."

The boys listened intently for an instant and then, without looking into the tents, sprang toward the machines. It seemed for a moment as if a thousand voices were shouting at them. They seemed to be in the center of a circle of men who were all practicing a different style of war-whoop.

To this day the boys assert that it was the whirling of the electric searchlights which kept the savages from advancing upon them. At any rate, for a time, the unseen visitors contented themselves with verbal demonstrations.

"We'll have to jump out on the machines!" advised Glenn. "We can't fight a whole army!"

"Why, there's only two!" Jimmie taunted. "You said yourself that we saw all the black men there were in this neighborhood!"

"Aw, keep still," Ben cried. "We haven't got time to listen to you boys joke each other! Come on, Jimmie! You and I for the *Louise!*"

It was now very dark, for banks of clouds lay low in the valley, but the boys knew that the machines were situated so as to run smoothly until the propellers and the planes brought them into the air. They had provided for that on landing.

With a chorus of savage yells still ringing in their ears, the boys leaped into their seats, still swinging their searchlights frantically as their only means of protection, and pressed the starters. The machines ran ahead smoothly for an instant then lifted.

The next minute there was absolute silence below. The boys were certain that if they could have looked down upon the savages who had been so threatening a moment before they would have seen them on their knees with their faces pressed to the ground.

"They'll talk about this night for a thousand years!" Jimmie screamed in Ben's ear as the *Louise* swept into and through a stratum of cloud. "They'll send it down to future generations in legends of magic."

"Little do we care what they think of us after we get out of their clutches!" Ben called back. "It seems like a miracle, our getting away at all!"

"Do you really think they are head-hunters?" shouted Jimmie.

"You saw more of them than I did," Ben answered.

After passing through the clouds the starlight showed the way, and in a very short time the lights of Quito were seen glittering twenty miles or so to the south.

"What are we going to do when we get to the town?" shouted Jimmie.

"Hire some one to watch the machines and get a square meal!" Ben replied. "And buy new tents and provisions and everything of that kind!" he went on. "I suppose those savages will have a fine time devouring our perfectly good food."

"And they'll probably use the oiled-silk tents for clothing!" laughed Jimmie. "I wonder if we can buy more at Quito."

"Of course we can!" replied Ben. "Quito has a hundred thousand inhabitants, and there are plenty of European places of business there!"

The *Bertha* with Glenn and Carl on board was some distance in advance, and directly the boys on the *Louise* saw the leading machine swing about in a circle and then gradually drop to the ground. Ben, who was driving the *Louise*, adopted the same tactics, and very soon the two flying machines lay together in an open field, perhaps a mile distant from Quito, the capital of Ecuador, the city known

throughout the world as the "City of Eternal Spring."

It was dark at the ground level, there being only the light of the stars, faintly seen through drifting masses of clouds, many hundred feet higher here than those which had nestled over the valley.

"What next?" asked Carl as the four boys leaped from their seats and gathered in a little group.

"Supper next!" shouted Jimmie.

"But we can't all leave the machines!" declared Glenn.

"Don't you ever worry about the machines being left alone!" asserted Ben. "Our lights will bring about a thousand people out here within the next ten minutes. Dark as it is, our machines were undoubtedly seen before we landed, and there'll soon be an army here asking questions. We'll have little trouble in finding English-speaking people in the mob."

"I guess that's right!" Jimmie agreed. "Here comes the gang right now!"

A jumble of English, Spanish and French was now heard, and directly a dozen or more figures were seen advancing across the field to where the flying machines had landed.

"There's some one talking United States, all right!" Jimmie declared.

Directly the visitors came up to where the boys

were standing and began gazing about, some impudently, some curiously and some threateningly.

"Keep your hands off the machines!" Glenn warned, as a dusky native began handling the levers.

The fellow turned about and regarded the boy with an impudent stare. He said something in Spanish which Glenn did not understand, and then walked away to a group of natives who were whispering suspiciously together.

"Where are you from?" asked a voice in English as Glenn examined the levers to see that nothing had been removed or displaced.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jimmie. "That United States talk sounds good to me!"

The man who had spoken now turned to Jimmie and repeated his question.

"Where do you boys come from?"

"New York," Jimmie replied.

"And you came across the Isthmus of Panama?" was the next question.

"Sure we did!" answered the boy.

"Well," the stranger said, "my name is Bixby, Jim Bixby, and I've been looking for you for two days."

"Is that so?" asked Jimmie incredulously.

"You see," Bixby went on, "I am a dealer in automobile supplies, probably the only one doing a large business in this part of the country. Some days ago I received a telegram from Louis Havens,

the millionaire aviator, saying that four pupils of his were coming this way, and advising me to take good care of you."

"Where did Mr. Havens wire from?" asked Jimmie.

"First from New York," was the reply, "and then from New Orleans. It seems that he started away from New York on the day following your departure, and that he has been having trouble with the *Ann* all the way down. His last telegram instructed me to ask you to wait here until his arrival. He ought to be here sometime to-morrow."

"That'll be fine!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"And now," Bixby went on, "you'll have to employ two or three fellows to watch your machines for the night. The natives would carry them away piecemeal if you left them here unguarded."

"Perhaps you can pick out two or three trusty men," suggested Glenn.

"I have had three men in mind ever since I received my first message from Mr. Havens!" replied Bixby. "When your machine was sighted in the air not long ago, I 'phoned to their houses and they will undoubtedly be here before long."

"How'll they know where to come?" asked Jimmie.

"Don't you think that half the people in Quito don't know where these wonders of the air lighted!" Bixby laughed. "The news went over

the city like lightning when your planes showed. Your lights, of course, revealed your exact whereabouts to those on this side of the town, and telephones and messenger boys have done the rest."

While the boys talked with this very welcome and friendly visitor, the clamor of an automobile was heard, and directly two great acetylene eyes left the highway and turned, bumping and swaying, into the field.

"There will be damages to pay for mussing up this grass!" Carl suggested, as a fresh crowd of sight-seers followed the machine into the enclosure.

"Of course," replied Bixby, "and they'll try to make you pay ten times what the damage really amounts to. But you leave all that to me. I can handle these fellows better than you can!"

"We shall be glad to have you do so!" Glenn replied.

In a moment the automobile ran up to the planes and stopped. Of the four men it contained, three alighted and approached Bixby.

"These are the guards," the latter said turning to the boys.

The men, who seemed both willing and efficient, drew a long rope and several steel stakes from the automobile and began enclosing the machines with the same. As the rope was strung out, the constantly increasing crowd was pushed back beyond the circle.

"Won't they make trouble for the guards during the night?" asked Ben.

"I think not," was the reply. "I have already arranged for a number of native policemen to assist these men."

"Gee!" exclaimed Carl, "I guess Mr. Havens picked out the right man!"

"How did he know we were going to stop at Quito?" asked Ben.

"He didn't know!" replied Bixby. "But he surmised that you'd be obliged to land here in order to fill your fuel tanks."

"Well, we didn't come here for that purpose," laughed Glenn. "We came here because the savages chased us out of a cute little valley about twenty miles away!"

"It's a wonder you got away at all if they saw you!" said Bixby.

"I guess they didn't seem to understand about our motors getting into the air!" laughed Jimmie. "The minute the wheel left the ground their war-cries ceased."

"It's a wonder you were permitted to get to the machines at all if they caught you away from them!" said Bixby.

"Aw, we always have the luck of the Irish," Jimmie replied. "The shooting and the display of electric searchlights kept them away until we got

into the seats and our way of ascending into the sky did the rest."

"You are very lucky boys!" insisted Bixby.

"It's nice to hear you say so!" Ben answered, "because we're going to follow this line of mountains down to Cape Horn, and visit every ruined temple on the route that has a ghost on its visiting list."

"If you'll listen to the stories you hear in the cities," laughed Bixby, "you'll visit a good many ruined temples."

"Glenn was telling us about a temple down on Lake Titicaca," Ben replied. "He says that figures in flowing white robes appear in the night-time, and are seen by the light that emanates from their own figures! He says, too, that there are illuminations of red, and green, and yellow, which come from no determinable source, and that there are noises which come out of the clear air unaccounted for!"

"There is such a temple, isn't there, Mr. Bixby?" asked Glenn.

"There is a temple about which such stories are told," laughed Bixby. "Are you boys thinking of going there?"

"Sure thing, we're going there!" asserted Jimmie.

During this conversation the three men who had been employed by Bixby to guard the flying

machine during the night had been standing by in listening attitudes. When the haunted temple and the proposed visit of the boys to it was mentioned, one of them whose name had been given as Doran, touched Jimmie lightly on the shoulder.

"Are you really going to that haunted temple?" he asked.

Jimmie nodded, and in a short time the four boys and Bixby left for the city in the automobile. As they entered the machine Jimmie thought that he caught a hostile expression on Doran's face, but the impression was so faint that he said nothing of the matter to his chums.

In an hour's time Bixby and the four boys were seated at dinner in the dining-room of a hotel which might have been on Broadway, so perfect were its appointments.

"Now let me give you a little advice," Bixby said, after the incidents of the journey had been discussed. "Never talk about prospective visits to ruined temples in South America. There is a general belief that every person who visits a ruin is in quest of gold, and many a man who set out to gratify his own curiosity has never been heard of again!"

CHAPTER IV.

PLANNING A MIDNIGHT RIDE.

"IF the people of the country believe there is gold in the temples said to be haunted," Glenn asked, "why don't they hunt for it themselves, without waiting for others to come down and give them a tip?"

"Generally speaking," replied Bixby, "every ruin in Peru has been searched time and again by natives. Millions of treasure has been found, but there is still the notion, which seems to have been born into every native of South America, that untold stores of gold, silver and precious stones are still concealed in the ruined temples."

"What I can't understand is this," Glenn declared. "Why should these natives, having every facility for investigation, follow the lead of strangers who come here mostly for pleasure?"

"I can't understand that part of it myself,"

Bixby replied, " except on the theory that the natives ascribe supernatural powers to foreigners. Even the most intelligent natives who do not believe in the magic of Europeans, watch them closely when they visit ruins, doubtless on the theory that in some way the visitors have become posted as to the location of treasure."

" Well," Ben observed, " they can't make much trouble for us, because we can light down on a temple, run through it before the natives can get within speaking distance, and fly away again."

" All the same," Bixby insisted, " I wouldn't talk very much about visiting ruins of any kind. And here's another thing," he went on, " there are stories afloat in Peru that fugitives from justice sometimes hide in these ruins. And so, you see," he added with a laugh, " you are likely to place yourself in bad company in the minds of the natives by being too inquisitive about the methods of the ancient Incas."

" All right," Glenn finally promised, " we'll be careful about mentioning ruins in the future."

After dinner the boys went to Bixby's place of business and ordered gasoline enough to fill the tanks. They also ordered an extra supply of

gasoline, which was to be stored in an auxiliary container of rubber made for that purpose.

"Now about tents and provisions?" asked Bixby.

"Confound those savages!" exclaimed Jimmie. "We carried those oiled-silk shelter-tents safely through two long journeys in the mountains of California and Mexico, and now we have to turn them over to a lot of savages in Ecuador! I believe we could have frightened the brutes away by doing a little shooting! Anyway, I wish we'd tried it!"

"Not for mine!" exclaimed Carl. "I don't want to go through the country killing people, even if they are South American savages."

"I may be able to get you a supply of oiled-silk in Quito," Bixby suggested, "but I am not certain. It is very expensive, you understand, of course, and rather scarce."

"The expense is all right," replied Glenn, "but we felt a sort of sentimental attachment for those old shelter-tents. We can get all the provisions we need here, of course?" he added.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Look here!" Jimmie cut in. "What time will there be a moon to-night?"

"Probably about one o'clock," was the reply.

"By that time, however, you ought all to be sound asleep in your beds."

"What's the idea, Jimmie?" asked Carl.

The boys all saw by the quickening expressions in the two boys' faces that they had arrived at an understanding as to the importance of moonlight on that particular night.

"Why, I thought—" began Jimmie. "I just thought it might not do any harm to run back to that peaceful little glade to see if the tents really have been removed or destroyed!"

"Impossible!" advised Bixby. "The tents may remain just where you left them, but, even if they are there, you may have no chance of securing them. It is a risky proposition!"

"What do you mean?" asked Ben.

"I mean that the superstition of the savages may restrain them from laying hands on the tents and provisions you left," replied Bixby, "but, at the same time," he continued, "they may watch the old camp for days in the hope of your return."

"What's the idea?" asked Glenn.

"Do they want to eat us?" asked Jimmie.

"Some of the wild tribes living near the head waters of the Amazon," Bixby explained, "are

crazy over the capture of white men. They are said to march them back to their own country in state, and to inaugurate long festivals in honor of the victory. And during the entire festival," Bixby went on, "the white prisoners are subjected to tortures of the most brutal description!"

"Say," giggled Jimmie, giving Carl a dig in the ribs with his elbow, "let's take the train for Guayaquil to-morrow morning! I don't think it's right for us to take chances on the savages having all the fun!"

"As between taking the first train for Guayaquil and taking a trip through the air to the old camp to-night," Bixby laughed, "I certainly advise in favor of the former."

"Aw, that's all talk," Ben explained, as Bixby, after promising to look about in the morning for oiled-silk and provisions, locked his place of business and started toward the hotel with the boys.

"What do you say to it, Carl?" Jimmie asked, as the two fell in behind the others.

"I'm game!" replied Carl.

"Then I'll tell you what we'll do!" Jimmie explained. "You and I will get a room together and remain up until moonrise. If the sky is clear of

clouds at that time, and promises to remain so until morning, we'll load ourselves down with all the guns we can get hold of and fly out to the old camp. It'll be a fine ride, anyway!"

"Pretty chilly, though, in high altitudes at this time of night," suggested Carl. "I'm most frozen now!"

"So'm I," Jimmie replied, "and I'll tell you what we'll do! When we start away we'll swipe blankets off the bed. I guess they'll keep us warm."

"Well, we'll have to keep Glenn and Ben from knowing anything about the old trip," Carl suggested. "Of course they couldn't prevent us going, but they'd put up a kick that would make it unpleasant."

"Indeed they would!" answered Jimmie. "But, at the same time, they'd go themselves if they'd got hold of the idea first. I suggested it, you know, and that's one reason why they would reject it."

Arrived at the hotel, Jimmie and Carl had no difficulty in getting a double room, although their chums looked rather suspiciously at them as they all entered the elevator.

"Now," said Ben, "don't you boys get into any

mischief to-night. Quito isn't a town for foreigners to explore during the dark hours!"

"I'm too sleepy to think of any midnight adventures!" cried Jimmie with a wink and a yawn.

"Me, too!" declared Carl. "I'll be asleep in about two minutes!"

It was about ten o'clock when the boys found themselves alone in a large room which faced one of the leading thoroughfares of the capital city. Quito is well lighted by electricity, and nearly all the conveniences of a city of the same size in the United State are there to be had.

The street below the room occupied by the two boys was brilliantly lighted until midnight, and the lads sat at a window looking out on the strange and to them unusual scene. When the lights which flashed from business signs and private offices were extinguished, the thoroughfare grew darker, and then the boys began seriously to plan their proposed excursion.

"What we want to do," Jimmie suggested, "is to get out of the hotel without being discovered and make our way to a back street where a cab can be ordered. It is a mile to the field where the machines were left, and we don't want to lose any time."

Before leaving the room the boys saw that their automatic revolvers and searchlights were in good order. They also made neat packages of the woolen blankets which they found on the bed and carried them away.

"Now," said Jimmie as they reached a side street and passed swiftly along in the shadow of a row of tall buildings, "we've got to get into a cab without attracting any attention, for we've stolen the hotel's blankets, and we can't talk Spanish, and if a cop should seize us we'd have a good many explanations to make."

"I don't think it's good sense to take the blankets," Carl objected.

"Aw, you'll think so when we get a couple of thousand feet up in the air on the *Louise!*" laughed Jimmie.

After walking perhaps ten minutes, the boys came upon a creaking old cab drawn by a couple of the sorriest-looking horses they had ever seen. The driver, who sat half asleep on the seat, jumped down to the pavement and eyed the boys suspiciously as they requested to be taken out to where the machines had been left.

The lads were expecting a long tussle between the

English and the Spanish languages, but the cabman surprised them by answering their request in excellent English.

"So?" exclaimed Jimmie. "You talk United States, too, do you? Where did you come from?"

"You want to go out to the machines, do you?" asked the cabman, without appearing to notice the question.

"That's where we want to go!" replied Carl.

"What for?" asked the cabman.

"None of your business!" replied Jimmie.

"I've been out there once to-night!" said the cabman, "and the party I drew beat me out of my fare."

"That's got nothing to do with us!" replied Carl.

"It'll cost you ten dollars!" growled the cabman.

"Say, look here!" Jimmie exclaimed. "You're a bigger robber than the New York cabmen! It's only a mile to the field, and we'll walk just to show you that we don't have to use your rickety old cab."

With a snarl and a frown the cabman climbed back up on his seat and gave every appearance of dropping into sound slumber.

"Now what do you think of that for a thief?"

asked Carl, as the boys hastened away toward the field. "I'd walk ten miles before I'd give that fellow a quarter!"

"We've got plenty of time," Jimmie answered. "The moon won't be up for an hour yet. Perhaps we'd better walk up anyway, for then we can enter the field quietly and see what's going on."

On the way out the lads met several parties returning from the field, and when they reached the opening in the fence they saw that many curious persons were still present. There were at least half a dozen vehicles of different kinds gathered close about the roped-off circle.

"Say," Carl exclaimed as the boys passed into the field, "look at that old rattletrap on the right. Isn't that the same vehicle the cabman pretended to go asleep on as we came away?"

"Sure it is!" answered Jimmie. "I don't remember the appearance of the cab so well, but I know just how the horses looked."

"He must have found a ten-dollar fare out here!" Carl suggested.

"Yes, and he must have come out by a roundabout way in order to prevent our seeing him. Now

what do you think he did that for? Why should he care whether we see him or not?"

As the boy asked the question the rig which they had been discussing was driven slowly away, not in the direction of the road, but toward the back end of the field.

"Something mighty funny going on here!" Jimmie declared. "I guess it's a good thing we came out."

When the boys came up to where the machines were lying, Doran was the first one to approach.

"Little nervous about your machines, eh?" he asked.

"Rather," replied Jimmie. "We came out with the idea of taking a short trip to see if they still are in working order."

"Well," Doran said with a scowl, "of course you know that you can't take the machines out without an order from Mr. Bixby!"

CHAPTER V.

A WAIF AND A STRAY.

"BIXBY doesn't own these machines!" exclaimed Carl angrily.

"Who does own them?" demanded Doran.

"We four boys own them!" was the reply.

"Well, you've got to show me!" insisted Doran, insolently.

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" Jimmie announced. "We'll go right back to Bixby and put you off the job!"

"Go as far as you like," answered Doran. "I was put here to guard these machines and I intend to do it. You can't bluff me!"

While the boys stood talking with the impertinent guard they saw two figures moving stealthily about the aeroplanes. Jimmie hastened over to the *Louise* and saw a man fumbling in the tool-box.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the boy.

The intruder turned a startled face for an in-

stant and then darted away, taking the direction the cab had taken.

Carl and Doran now came running up and Jimmie turned to the latter.

"Nice old guard you are!" he almost shouted. "Here you stand talking with us while men are sneaking around the machines!"

"Was there some one here?" asked Doran in assumed amazement.

"There surely was!" replied Jimmie. "Where are the other guards?"

"Why," replied Doran hesitatingly, "they got tired of standing around doing nothing and went home. It's pretty dull out here."

"Well," Jimmie answered, "I'm going to see if this machine has been tampered with! Get up on one of the seats, Carl," he said with a wink, "and we'll soon find out if any of the fastenings have been loosened."

The boy was permitted to follow instructions without any opposition or comment from Doran, and in a moment Jimmie was in the other seat with the wheels in motion.

Seeing too late the trick which had been played upon him, Doran uttered an exclamation of anger

and sprang for one of the planes. His fingers just scraped the edge of the wing as the machine, gathering momentum every instant, lifted from the ground, and he fell flat.

He arose instantly to shake a threatening fist at the disappearing aeroplane. Jimmie turned back with a grin on his freckled face.

"Catch on behind," he said, "and I'll give you a ride!"

"Did you see some one fumbling around the machine?" asked Carl, as Jimmie slowed the motors down a trifle in order to give a chance for conversation.

"Sure, I did!" was the reply. "He ducked away when he saw me coming, and ran away into the field in the direction taken by the cab."

"Gee!" exclaimed Carl. "Do you think the cabman brought that man out to work some mischief with the flying machines?"

"I don't think much about it," Jimmie answered, "because I don't know much about it! He might have done something to the machine which will cause us to take a drop in the air directly, but I don't think so. Anyhow, it's running smoothly now."

"Still we're taking chances!" insisted Carl.

The moon now stood well up in the eastern sky, a round, red ball of fire which looked to the lads large enough to shadow half the sky a little later on. Below, the surface of the earth was clearly revealed in its light.

"We'll have to hurry!" Carl suggested, "if we get back to the hotel before daylight, so I'll quit talking and you turn on more power."

"I may not be able to find this blooming old valley where we left the tents," Jimmie grumbled. "If you remember, son, we left that locality in something of a hurry!"

"I certainly remember something which looked to me like a jungle scene in a comic opera!" grinned Carl. "And the noise sounded not unlike some of the choruses I have heard in little old New York!"

Jimmie drove straight north for an hour, and then began circling to left and right in search of the little valley from which they had fled so precipitously. At last the gleam of running water caught his eyes and he began volplaning down.

"Are you sure that's the place?" asked Carl, almost screaming the words into Jimmie's ears. "I don't see any tents down there, do you?"

"I see something that looks like a tent," Jimmie

answered. "We are so high up now that we couldn't distinguish one of them anyhow."

As the aeroplane drove nearer to the earth, a blaze flared up from below. In its red light they saw the two shelter-tents standing in exactly the same position in which they had been left.

"There!" cried Jimmie. "I had an idea we'd find them!"

"But look at the fire!" cautioned Carl. "There's some one there keeping up that blaze!"

"That's a funny proposition, too!" exclaimed Jimmie. "It doesn't seem as if the savages would remain on the ground after our departure."

"And it doesn't seem as if they would go away without taking everything they could carry with them, either!" laughed Carl.

"We can't guess it out up here," Jimmie argued. "We may as well light and find out what it means. Have your guns ready, and shoot the first savage who comes within range."

When the rubber-tired wheels of the machine struck the ground which they had occupied only a short time before, the boys found a great surprise awaiting them. As if awakened from slumber by the clatter of the motors, a figure dressed in non-

descript European costume arose from the fire, yawning and rubbing his eyes, and advanced to meet them.

It was the figure of a young man of perhaps eighteen, though the ragged and soiled clothing he wore, the unwashed face, the long hair, made it difficult for one to give any accurate estimate as to the years of his life. He certainly looked like a tramp, but he came forward with an air of assurance which could not have been improved upon by a millionaire hotel-keeper, or a haughty three-dollar-a-week clerk in a ten-cent store.

"Je—rusalem!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Now what do you think of this?"

"I saw him first!" declared Carl.

"All right, you may have him!"

The intruder came forward and stood for a moment without speaking, regarding the boys curiously in the meantime.

"Well," Jimmie said in a moment, "what about it?"

"I thought you'd be back," said the other.

"Where are the savages?" asked Carl. "Didn't you bump into a war party here?"

The stranger smiled and pointed to the tents.

"I am a truthful man," he said. "I wouldn't tell a lie for a dollar. I might tell six for five dollars, but I wouldn't tell one lie for any small sum. My name is Sam Weller, and I'm a tramp."

"That's no lie!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Unless appearances are deceiving!"

"Perhaps," Carl, suggested, "we'd better be getting out of here. The natives may return."

"As soon as you have given me time to relate a chapter of my life," Sam Weller continued, "you'll understand why the savages won't be back here to-night."

"Go on!" Jimmie grunted. "Tell us the story of your life, beginning with the poor but dishonest parents and the statement that you were never understood when you were a baby!"

"This chapter of my life," Sam went on, without seeming to notice the interruption, "begins shortly after sunset of the evening just passed.

"Go ahead!" Carl exclaimed. "Get a move on!"

"While walking leisurely from the Isthmus of Panama to Cape Horn," Sam began, "I saw your two flying machines drop down into this valley. At that time," he continued, "I was in need of

sustenance. I am happy to state, however," he added with a significant look in the direction of half a dozen empty tin cans, "that at the present moment I feel no such need. For the present I am well supplied."

"Holy Mackerel!" exclaimed Carl. "But you've got your nerve."

"My nerve is my fortune!" replied Sam whimsically. "But, to continue my narrative," he went on. "It seemed to me a dispensation of providence in my favor when you boys landed in the valley. In my mind's eye, I saw plenty to eat and unexceptionable companionship. You were so thoroughly interested in landing that I thought it advisable to wait for a more receptive mood in which to present my petition for—for—well, not to put too fine a point upon it, as Micawber would say—for grub."

"Say!" laughed Carl. "It's a sure thing you've panhandled in every state in the union."

Sam smiled grimly but continued without comment.

"So I hid myself back there in the tall grass and waited for you to get supper. Don't you see," he went on, "that when a boy's hungry he doesn't

radiate that sympathy for the unfortunate which naturally comes with a full stomach. Therefore, I waited for you boys to eat your supper before I asked for mine."

"You're all right, anyhow!" shouted Jimmie.

"But it seems that your meal was long-delayed," Sam went on, with a little shrug of disgust. "I lay there in the long grass and waited, hoping against hope. Then you two went after fish. Then in a short time I heard cries of terror and supplication. Then your two friends rushed out to your assistance. Then, being entirely under the influence of hunger and not responsible for my acts, I crawled into one of the tents and began helping myself to the provisions."

"And you were there when the savages flocked down upon us?" asked Carl. "You saw what took place after that?"

"I was there and I saw," was the reply. "When you boys came running back to the machines I stood ready to defend you with my life and two automatic revolvers which I had found while searching through the provisions. When you sprang into the machines and slipped away, leaving the savages still hungry, I felt that my last hour had come. However, I clung

to the guns and a can of a superior brand of beans put up at Battle Creek, Michigan."

"How did you come out with the Indians?" asked Carl. "Did you tell them the story of your life?"

"Hardly!" was the laughing reply. "I appeared at the door of the tent in a chastened mood, it is true, ready for peace or war, but when I saw the savages lying upon their hands and elbows, faces bowed to the tall grass, I reached the conclusion that I had them—well Buffaloed!"

"The machines did it?" asked Jimmie.

"The machines did it!" replied Sam. "The Indians bowed their heads for a long time, and then gazed in awe at the disappearing aeroplanes. As I said a moment ago, they were Buffaloed. When they saw me standing at the door of the tent, they looked about for another machine. So did I for a matter of fact, for I thought I needed one just about then!"

"Can you run a machine?" asked Carl.

"Sure I can run a machine!" was the reply. "I can run anything from a railroad train to a race with a township constable. Well, when the machines disappeared, the savages vanished. Not a

thing about the camp was touched. I appointed myself custodian, and decided to remain here until you came back after your tents."

"Then where are you going?" asked Carl.

"With your permission, I will place three days' provisions under my belt and be on my way."

"Not three days' supplies all at once?" questioned Jimmie.

"All at once!" replied Sam.

The two boys consulted together for a moment, and then Jimmie said:

"If you'll help us pack the tents and provisions on the machine, we'll take you back to Quito with us. That is, if the *Louise* will carry so much weight. I think she will, but ain't sure."

"It surely will be a treat to ride in the air again!" declared the tramp. "It has been a long time since Louis Havens kicked me out of his hangar on Long Island for getting intoxicated and filling one of the tanks with beer instead of gasoline."

The boys smiled at each other significantly, for they well remembered Mr. Havens' story of the tramp's rather humorous experience at the Long

Island establishment. However, they said nothing to Sam of this.

"And, in the meantime," the tramp said, pointing upward, "we may as well wait here until we ascertain what that other machine is doing in the air at this time of night!"

CHAPTER VI.

AUTOMOBILE VS. AEROPLANE.

SHORTLY after midnight Ben was awakened by a noise which seemed to come from the door of his room. Half asleep as he was, it came to his consciousness like the sparkling of a motor. There was the same sharp tick, tick, tick, with regular pauses between.

As he sat up in bed and listened, however, the sounds resolved themselves into the rattle of one metal against another. In a minute he knew that some one unfamiliar with the lock of his door was moving the stem of a key against the metal plate which surrounded the key-hole.

Then he heard the bolt shoot back and the door opened. There was an electric switch on the wall within reach of his hand, and in a second the room was flooded with light. The person who stood in the center of the floor, halfway between the door-

way and the bed, was an entire stranger to the boy. He was dressed in clothing which would not have been rejected by the head waiter of one of the lobster palaces on Broadway, and his manner was pleasing and friendly.

He smiled and dropped into a chair, holding out both hands when he saw Ben's eyes traveling from himself to an automatic revolver which lay on a stand at the head of the bed.

"Of course," he said, then, as Ben sat down on the edge of the bed, "you want to know what I'm doing here."

"Naturally!" replied the boy.

The man, who appeared to be somewhere near the age of twenty-five, drew a yellow envelope from his pocket and tossed it over to Ben.

"I am manager at the Quito telegraph office!" he said. "And I received this despatch for you just before twelve o'clock. In addition to this I received a personal message from Mr. Havens. Read your message and then I will show you mine!"

Ben opened the envelope and read:

"Be sure and wait for me at the point where this

message is delivered. Complications which can only be explained in person!"

The manager then passed his own despatch over to the boy. It read as follows:

"Mr. Charles Mellen, Manager: Spare no expense in the delivery of the message to Ben Whitcomb. If necessary, wire all stations on your circuit for information regarding aeroplanes. If Whitcomb is at Quito, kindly deliver this message in person, and warn him to be on the watch for trouble. I hope to reach your town within twenty-four hours."

"Now for an explanation regarding my surreptitious entrance into your sleeping room," Mellen went on. "My room is next to yours, and in order not to awaken other sleepers, and at the same time make certain that you understood the situation thoroughly, I tried my hand at burglary."

"I am glad you did!" replied Ben. "For if there is anything serious in the air it is quite important that no stir be created in the hotel at this hour of the night."

"That was just my idea!" Mellen answered. "I knew that if I asked the clerk to send a page to your room every person in the hotel would know all

about the midnight visit in the morning. So far as I know, understand, the complications hinted at by Mr. Havens may have had their origin in Quito—perhaps in this very hotel."

"It was very thoughtful of you," answered Ben. "You know Mr. Havens personally?" he asked then.

"Certainly!" was the reply. "He is a heavy stock-holder in the company I represent; and it was partly through his influence that I secured my present position."

"After all," smiled Ben, "this is a small world, isn't it? The idea of finding a friend of a friend up near the roof of the world!"

"Yes, it's a small world," replied Mellen. "Now tell me this," he went on, "have you any idea as to what Mr. Havens refers in his two rather mysterious messages?"

"Not the slightest!" was the reply.

"I wish we knew where to find Havens at this time," mused Mellen.

"I don't think it will be possible to reach him until he wires again," Ben answered, "because, unless I am greatly mistaken, he is somewhere between New Orleans and this point in his airship, the *Ann*."

"I gathered as much from his messages to Bixby," replied Mellen. "You see," the manager went on, "I got in touch with Havens to-night through the despatches he sent to Bixby yesterday, I say 'yesterday' because it is now 'to-morrow'," he added with a smile.

"Then you knew we were here?" asked Ben. "That is," he corrected himself, "you knew Bixby was expecting us?"

"When Bixby left you at the hotel," Mellen laughed, "he came direct to the telegraph office, so you see I knew all about it before I burglarized your room."

"Bixby strikes me as being a very straightforward kind of a man," Ben suggested. "I rather like his appearance."

"He's all right!" replied Mellen.

"And now," Ben continued, "I'd like to have you remain here a short time until I can call the other boys and get a general expression of opinion."

"Of course you'll wait for Mr. Havens?" suggested Mellen.

"Of course," answered Ben. "However," he continued, "I'd like to have the other members of the party talk this matter over with you. To tell

the truth, I'm all at sea over this suggestion of trouble."

"I shall be pleased to meet the other members of your party," replied Mellen. "I have already heard something of them through my correspondence with Mr. Havens."

Ben drew on his clothes and hurried to Glenn's room. The boy was awake and opened the door at the first light knock. Ben merely told him to go to the room where Mr. Mellen had been left and passed on to the apartment which had been taken by Jimmie and Carl.

He knocked softly on the door several times but received no answer. Believing that the boys were sound asleep he tried the door, and to his great surprise found that it was unlocked.

As the reader will understand, he found the room unoccupied. The bed had not been disturbed except that some of the upper blankets were missing.

He hastened back to his own room, where he found Glenn and Mellen engaged in conversation. Both looked very blank when informed of the disappearance of Jimmie and Carl.

"What do you make of it?" asked Mellen.

"I don't know what to make of it!" replied Glenn.

"I think I can explain it!" Ben cried, walking nervously up and down the room. "Don't you remember, Glenn," he went on, "that Jimmie and Carl suggested the advisability of going back to the old camp after moonrise and getting the valuable tents, arms and provisions we left there?"

"Sure I remember that!" answered Glenn. "But do you really think they had the nerve to try a scheme like that?"

"I haven't the least doubt of it!" declared Ben.

"It's just one of their tricks," agreed Glenn.

"They must be rather lively young fellows!" suggested Mellen.

"They certainly are!" answered Ben. "And now the question is this," he continued, "what ought we to do?"

"I'm afraid they'll get into trouble," Glenn suggested.

"It was a foolhardy thing to do!" Mellen declared. "The idea of their going back into the heart of that savage tribe is certainly preposterous! I'm afraid they're already in trouble."

"Perhaps we ought to get the *Bertha* and take a

trip out there!" suggested Glenn. "They may be in need of assistance."

"That's just my idea!" Ben agreed.

"It seems to me that the suggested course is the correct one to pursue," Mellen said.

"Perhaps we can get to the field before they leave for the valley," Ben interposed. "They spoke of going after the moon came up, and that was only a short time ago."

"Well," said Mellen, "the quicker we act the more certain we shall be of success. You boys get downstairs, if you can, without attracting much attention, and I'll go out and get a carriage."

"Will you go with us to the field?" asked Ben.

"I should be glad to," was the reply.

When the boys reached the corner of the next cross street, in ten minutes' time, they found Mellen waiting for them with a high-power automobile. He was already in the seat with the chauffeur.

"I captured a machine belonging to a friend of mine," he said, with a smile, "and so we shall be able to make quick time."

As soon as the party came within sight of the field they saw that something unusual was taking place there, for people were massing from different parts

of the plain to a common center, and people standing in the highway, evidently about to seek their homes, turned and ran back.

"Can you see the flying machines?" asked Ben.

"I can see one of them!" answered Mellen in the front seat. "And it seems to be mounting into the air!"

"I guess the little rascals have got off in spite of us!" declared Ben. "Perhaps we'd better hold up a minute and follow the direction it takes. It may not head for the valley."

"It's heading for the valley, all right!" Glenn exclaimed.

"Yes, and there's something going on in the field below," Mellen declared. "There are people running about, evidently in great excitement, and the second machine is being pushed forward."

"Do you think the little rascals have taken a machine apiece?" demanded Ben. "There's no knowing what they will do!"

"No, I don't," replied Glenn. "They'd be sure to stick together."

"Then we'd better hustle up and find who's taking out the second machine!" exclaimed Ben. "This does look like trouble, doesn't it?"

"Oh, it may be all right," smiled Mellen. "The boys may have taken a machine apiece."

When the party reached the field the second flying machine was some distance away. The driver, however, seemed to be wavering about in the air as if uncertain of his control of the levers. Once or twice in an uncertain current of air the *Bertha* came near dropping to the ground. In time, however, he gained better control.

One of the native policemen secured by Bixby rushed up to the automobile as it came to a stop. He recognized Mellen in the car and addressed him in Spanish, speaking as if laboring under great excitement.

The boys listened to the conversation very impatiently, noting with no little apprehension the look of anxiety growing on the face of the manager as he listened to the story of the policeman. At length Mellen turned to the boys and began translating what he had heard.

The story told by the policeman was virtually the story told in the last chapter, with the exception that it included the departure of Doran and another in pursuit of the *Louise*.

"The policeman," Mellen went on, "is of the

opinion that Doran means mischief. He declares that he rather forced himself on Bixby, and was instrumental in securing the absence of the two Englishmen who were to assist him in guarding the aeroplanes.

"It seems that the trouble arrived shortly after the Havens' telegram," suggested Ben. "I wish I knew what it meant."

"No one this side of Kingdom Come knows!" declared Glenn. "That is, no one save Mr. Havens," he added. "Anyway, it's trouble!"

"How far is it to that valley?" asked Mellen.

"At least twenty miles!" replied Ben.

"Would it be possible to reach it in this machine?"

"I can't answer that question," replied Ben, "because it was dark when we came over the ground. It seems, however, to be all up hill and down on the way there. I don't think the machine could make the trip."

"I've a great notion to try it!" declared Mellen. "Anyway," he went on, "we can tour along in that direction. The man in charge of the last aeroplane doesn't seem to be next to his job and he may get a tumble."

"And if he does," cried Ben, "we'll give him a lift, patch up the machine, and start over to the old camp!"

And so, with the two machines in the air, the automobile went roaring and panting over the rough mountain trails in the direction of the valley! Occasionally the occupants saw the last machine but not often!

CHAPTER VII.

A PAIR OF PLANS.

"THAT other machine," Jimmie observed glancing hastily in the direction pointed out by Sam, "looks to me like the *Bertha.*"

"Can you identify an aeroplane at that distance in the night-time?" asked Sam. "I'm sure I couldn't do anything of the kind!"

"I don't know as I can express it," Jimmie replied, "but to me every flying machine has a method and manner of its own. There is something in the way an aeroplane carries itself in the sky which reminds me somewhat of the manner of a man in walking. In the case of the man, you know who it is long before you can see his face, and in the case of the flying machine, you know her long before the details of construction are in view. I'm sure that is the *Bertha!*"

"It is the *Bertha,* all right!" Carl cut in. "And she isn't being handled by one of our boys, either!"

"It isn't possible, is it, that that fellow Doran found the nerve to chase us up?" asked Jimmie. "If he did, he's a poor aviator, all right!"

"It's a wonder to me he doesn't tip the machine over," Sam suggested.

"He may tip it over yet!" exclaimed Carl. "Just see how it sways and sags every time it comes to one of the little currents of air sweeping out of the gorges. I anticipate a quick tumble there!"

"That's a nice thing," exclaimed Jimmie, "for some one to steal the machine and break it up! If the *Bertha* goes to pieces now, we'll have to delay our trip until another aeroplane can be bought, and the chances are that we can never buy one as reliable as the *Bertha.*"

"She isn't smashed yet!" grinned the tramp. "She's headed straight for the camp now, and may get here safely. The aviator seems to understand how to control the levers, but he doesn't know how to meet air currents. If he had known the country well enough, he might have followed an almost direct river level to this point."

"We didn't know enough to do that!" Carl exclaimed. "We came over mountains, gorges, and all kinds of dangerous precipices."

"That was unnecessary," laughed the tramp, still keeping his eyes fixed on the slowly-approaching flying machine. "The south branch of the Esmeraldas river rises in the volcano country somewhere south of Quito. The east branch of the same river rises something like a hundred miles east and north of Quito. These two branches meet down there in front of the camp. You can almost see the junction from here."

"Could a boat sail down either branch of the river?" asked Carl.

"I don't know about that," was the reply, "but there must be a continuous valley from Quito to the junction. If yonder aviator had followed that, or if you had followed it, there would have been no trouble with gorge winds or gusty drafts circling around mountain tops."

"Is there a road through the valley?" asked Jimmie. "A wagon road, I mean. It seems that there ought to be."

"There are a succession of rough trails used by teamsters," was the reply. "I came down that way

myself. The trails climb over ridges and dip down into canyons, but it seems to me that the roadbed is remarkably smooth. In fact, there seems to be a notion in the minds of the natives that a very important commercial highway followed the line of the river a good many centuries ago. I don't know whether this is correct or not, but I do know that the highway is virtually unknown to most of the people living at Quito. I blundered on it by mistake."

"We'll go back that way," Carl suggested, "and, as we can fly low down, there will be no risk in taking you along with us."

The flying machine which had been discovered approaching the camp a few minutes before was now near enough so that two figures could be distinguished on the seats. The machine was still reeling uncertainly, the aviator undoubtedly seeking a place to land.

"You see," Carl explained, "the fellow is a stranger so far as this camp is concerned. If he had ever been here before, he would now know exactly what to do. Either Ben or Glenn could lay the machine within six inches of the *Louise* without half trying."

"Then you are certain that it is not one of your friends in control of the aeroplane?" asked Sam.

"I am sure of that!" replied Jimmie. "Neither one of the boys would handle a machine the way that one is being handled."

"When she gets a little nearer we can tell whether that man Doran is on board or not," suggested Carl rather anxiously.

"If you are certain that the machine has been stolen from the field where she was left," Sam went on, "you ought to decide without delay what course to take when she lands. The man having her in charge may have followed you here with hostile intentions."

"That's very true!" Carl agreed.

"We have two automatics apiece," Jimmie grinned, "and we know how to use them, so we'll be able to take care of ourselves, whatever happens!"

"And I have two which I found lying with the provision packages in one of the tents," said Sam. "Perhaps I shall be able now to pay for my dinner. I'm always glad to do that whenever I can."

The oncoming machine was now circling over the valley, and it seemed that a landing would be

made in a few minutes. The boys moved back to where the *Louise* lay, then stood waiting and watching anxiously.

"Do you think the men on the machine saw you?" asked Jimmie, in a moment, turning to Sam. "It doesn't seem possible that they did!"

"Certainly not!" answered Sam. "You must remember that it is dark down here, and that they are virtually looking into a black hole in the hills. The way they approach the valley indicates that. Only for the remnants of the fire, I don't believe they could have found the valley at all!"

"Perhaps they haven't seen us, either!" Carl suggested.

"I don't think they have," Sam answered.

"Then I'll tell you what we'll do!" Jimmie exclaimed. "We'll scatter and hide in three different places, in three different directions. Then, when they land, we'll perform the Jesse James act and order them to throw up their hands! With six automatics pointing in their direction, they'll probably obey orders without argument."

"I should think they would!" laughed Carl.

"What's the idea after that?" Sam questioned.

"I don't know," Jimmie returned. "Anyway,

we'll get the machine and leave them to walk back to Quito. By the time they have accomplished that stunt, we'll be on our way to the haunted temples of Peru. I'm getting sick of this old country, anyway."

Bending low in the darkness so as to avoid being seen from above, the three scattered, in accordance with this arrangement, and lay, securely hidden, in the tall grass when the *Bertha* came wavering down. Owing to the inexperience of the aviator, she struck the earth with a good deal of a bump, and exclamations of rage were heard from the seats when the motors were switched into silence.

"This must be the place," Jimmie heard one of the men saying, as the two leaped to the ground. "There's been a fire here not long ago, and there are the tents, just as described by the boys."

"Yes," another voice said, "and there is the *Louise* back in the shadows. It's a wonder we didn't see her before."

"But where are the boys?" the first speaker said.

"We don't care where the boys are," a voice which Jimmie recognized as that of Doran ex-

claimed. "The boys can do nothing without these machines. It seems a pity to break them up."

"We won't break them up until we have to!" the other declared.

"I was thinking of that," Doran answered. "Suppose we pack up the tents and provisions and such other things as we can use and take everything away into some valley where we can hide the machines and all the rest until this little excitement blows over."

"That's just the idea!" the other answered. "When things quiet down a little we can get a good big price for these machines."

"And in the meantime," Doran continued, "we'll have to catch the boys if they interfere with our work. If they don't, we'll just pack up the stuff and fly away in the machines."

"And the two lads at Quito?" asked the other.

"Oh," Doran replied with a coarse laugh, "it will take them three or four days to find out where their friends are, and a couple of weeks more to get new machines, and by that time everything will be all lovely down in Peru. It seems to be working out all right!"

Jimmie felt the touch of a hand upon his shoulder and in a moment, Carl whispered in his ear:

"Do you mind the beautiful little plans they're laying?" the boy asked.

"Cunning little plans, so far as we're concerned!" whispered Jimmie.

"What do they mean by everything being lovely down in Peru after a couple of weeks?" asked Carl. "That sounds mysterious!"

"You may search me!" answered Jimmie. "It looks to me, though, as if the trouble started here might be merely the advance agent of the trouble supposed to exist across the Peruvian boundary."

"I suppose," Carl went on, "that we're going to lie right here and let them pack up our stuff and fly away in our machines?"

"Yes, we are!" replied Jimmie. "What we're going to do is to give those fellows a little healthy exercise walking back to Quito."

Directly Doran and his companion found a few sticks of dry wood which had been brought in by the boys and began building up the fire, for the double purpose of warmth and light. Then they both began tumbling the tinned goods out of the

tents and rolling the blankets which the boys had used for bedding.

"Ain't it about time to call a halt?" asked Jimmie.

"It certainly is!" Carl answered. "I wonder where our friend Sam is by this time? He wouldn't light out and leave us, would he?"

"I don't think he would," was the reply. "I have a notion that this mix-up is just about to his taste!"

Just as Jimmie was about to show himself, revolvers in hand, preparatory to sailing away in the machines and leaving the intruders with their hands held well up, a murmur which seemed to come from a myriad of human voices vibrated on the air and the tall grass all about the place where the tents had been pitched seemed to be imbued with life.

"Savages!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Gee!" whispered Carl, excitedly. "This location seems to be attracting attention to-night! What are we going to do?"

"If those outlaws were away," explained Jimmie, "we'd know well enough what we ought to do! We'd make a rush for the machines and get aboard, just as we did before."

"I wonder if Doran and his companion will have sense enough to try that?" asked Carl. "If they do, we'll have to stop them, for we can't lose the machines. They ought to be shot, anyway."

While the boys whispered together the savages, evidently in large numbers, crept toward the aeroplanes in an ever-narrowing circle. As luck would have it, the place where Jimmie and Carl were hidden was permitted by the savages to make a break in the circle because of the depression in which they lay, their heads on a level with the surface of the earth.

The savages swept almost over them, and in a moment, by lifting their heads above the grass in the rear of the dusky line, they saw the attacking party swarming around the tents and the machines. Doran and his companion were seized, disarmed, and tied up with stout fiber woven from the bark of a tree. Directly a scouting party brought Sam into the group.

The tramp had apparently surrendered without any attempt at defence, and the boys wondered a little at that until they found themselves facing lithe spears which waved significantly to and fro within six inches of their heads! Then they, too,

laid down their automatics, for they understood very well that there was horrible death in the poisoned shafts.

They, too, were marched to the center of the group, now gathered about the machines. Doran and his companion gazed at them with terror showing in their faces, and the tramp seemed to consider the situation as too serious for comment. He moved closer to the two boys, but was almost immediately forced back by the savages.

In a moment the war chants and ejaculations of victory died out while two savages who seemed to be in charge of the party spoke together.

During this silence, tense with excitement, the distant chug, chug, chug of motors beat the air. The boys looked aloft for an aeroplane, yet did not understand how one could possibly be there!

CHAPTER VIII.

A SPRING FOR LIBERTY.

The savages heard the clamor of the motors, too, and turned quick faces of alarm toward their white prisoners, as if they alone could explain what was coming to pass. Doran and his companion, also, turned questioning glances toward the two boys, while a slow smile of comprehension flitted over the face of the tramp.

As the welcome sounds came nearer the savages gathered closer and moved a short distance toward the thicket, their spears extended as if to repel attack. Sam now approached the two boys without opposition.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked with a positive grin.

"Sounds like an aeroplane!" suggested Jimmie.

"Or like an automobile!" Carl put in.

"Aw, how could an automobile get up here?" demanded Jimmie.

"Don't you remember the river road Sam was telling us about not long ago?" asked Carl. "I guess an automobile could run along that, all right!"

"Is that so?" asked Jimmie turning to Sam.

"A superior machine driven by a superior chauffeur might," was the reply. "Anyway, that's a motor-car coming, and there's no other way to get in here. We'll see the lights in a moment."

"Gee!" Jimmie exclaimed. "Do you think our friends chased the men who stole the *Bertha* up in a high-power automobile?"

"That's just what I do think!" exclaimed Carl.

"And that is undoubtedly the fact," Sam agreed.

Doran and his companion seemed to share in the pleasant anticipations the boys were now sensing, for they approached them in a friendly manner and began asking questions regarding the oncoming machine.

The savages were still drawing farther away, and Sam occupied his time during the next moment in finding his way back to the tents and procuring another automatic revolver which had not been discovered by the outlaws. He held it so that

the two boys caught sight of the brown barrel and nodded significantly toward Doran and his friend.

"He doesn't mean to let them get away," said Jimmie to Carl, in a low aside. "He seems to be next to his job!"

The savages, with their eyes fixed upon the jungle near the river bank, kept crowding farther away from the machines. The clamor of the motors came louder every instant, and directly two powerful acetylene lamps looked out of the tall grass like great blazing eyes.

The savages no longer hesitated as to how to meet this new situation. They dropped their spears and whatever else they had in their hands and broke for the thicket, uttering such cries of fright and terror as the boys had never imagined could issue forth from human lips. Doran and his companion sprang for the machines as the savages disappeared.

When Ben, Glenn and Mellen came bumping up in the automobile, a minute later, they saw the two fellows standing by the side of the *Louise* with their hands held high in the air. Before them stood

Sam with a threatening revolver pushed to within six inches of their faces.

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Ben, springing from the machine. "This looks like a scene in one of the fierce old dramas they used to put on at the Bowery theater! Are those the men who stole the *Bertha?*" he added nodding toward the two whose arms were still held out.

"They came here in the *Bertha!*" replied Carl.

"Mr. Mellen," began Doran, "you know me well enough to know that I wouldn't get mixed up in any such thieving scrape! These two boys came to the field and ran away with the *Louise*. I had orders not to let any one take the machines away, so I followed them in the *Bertha.*"

"And he merely employed me to go with him!" the other fellow cut in.

"They stole the machine!" insisted Jimmie. "I heard them talking about leaving us here to walk back to Quito and hiding the machines in some mountain valley until the search for them had died out. They were even packing up our provisions and tents to take with them when the savages came up!"

"So those were savages who took to the tall timber?" asked Glenn.

"The same kind of people who drove us out of the valley," answered Jimmie. "They had the whole bunch pinched when your machine came dancing merrily out of the woods!"

"And the way the niggers took to the tall timber was a caution!" exclaimed Carl. "They must be going yet!"

"Mr. Mellen," broke in Doran, "I insist on being released from this ridiculous position. I ask you to order this tramp to remove his revolver. I am not used to such indignities."

"He is not subject to my orders," replied Mellen.

The tramp looked at Doran with a humorous smile on his face.

"I don't understand," he said, "how you managed to reach this place in a road machine. It must have been awful going!"

"It certainly was!" answered Mellen. "Many a time I thought the machine incapable of making the grades, and on various occasions we nearly dropped over precipices."

"I never was so scared in my life!" declared Ben.

"Riding an aeroplane is a picture of peace and safety in comparison to such a whirl as that!" declared Glenn. "I hung on with my toes most of the way! And," he added, with a grin, "I saw Ben getting ready to jump several times."

"We went so fast I couldn't jump!" declared Ben.

"I must congratulate you on the trip," Sam cut in in a manner intended to be friendly. "I don't think any motor-car ever passed over that river trail before! You certainly have blazed the way for others!"

"Tell it to the chauffeur!" laughed Mellen. "And now, boys," he went on, "seeing you have rescued your precious oiled-silk shelter-tents, we may as well be getting back to the city."

"I want to travel back in the *Bertha!*" exclaimed Ben.

"And so do I!" Glenn cut in. "No more of that river ride for me!"

"That leaves me to the full command of the motor-car!" laughed Mellen. "I think one of you boys, at least, might ride back with me."

"Why, if the boys take the machines," Doran put in, "there's nothing for us to do but ride back in the motor-car."

"You'll walk so far as I'm concerned!" exclaimed Mellen.

"Then I'll act as first mate of the roadster," suggested Sam, whereat Mellen looked at the boys inquiringly.

"He's all right!" Jimmie exclaimed. "We found him here acting as custodian of the camp," he continued with a grin. "And you can see for yourself how he pinched these two thieves."

"Be careful boy!" almost shouted Doran. "You'll have to answer for every word you say against me!"

"I said 'thieves'!" insisted Jimmie. "I overheard what you said before the savages came up. You were going to make us walk back to Quito, and now we'll give you a dose of your own medicine. You're the rascals that'll do the walking."

Mellen called the boys aside and, after learning exactly what had taken place, both at the field and at the camp, fully agreed that the men ought to be obliged to walk back to Quito.

"It will teach them a lesson," he said, "and, be-

sides, it will keep them out of mischief for at least twenty-four hours!"

"Now," Ben said, "Jimmie and I will go back in the *Louise,* and Glenn and Carl can take the *Bertha.* You, Mr. Mellen, and Sam can return in the automobile, and we'll fly just above you along the river trail. If you tumble over a precipice," he added, with a smile, "we may be able to pick you up, or you may be able to help us!"

"There is one thing about it," Carl suggested, "and that is that we won't have to use the flying machines for freight wagons. The automobile can carry the tents and provisions and everything of that sort back to Quito. That will make it easier for us to duck about and watch the course of the automobile. You may need watching, you know," he added turning to Mellen. "Especially," he continued, "if you have Sam Weller with you!"

The boys mounted the machines and were soon in the air, while Mellen and Sam entered the motor-car, the latter keeping Doran and his companion covered with an automatic revolver until the car was ready to start. Both men sprang forward as the wheels began to revolve.

"Are you really going away and leave us to

walk to Quito?" demanded Doran. "The savages will be here in an hour after you leave!"

This was an argument which Mellen could not resist. It was perfectly clear that the men would be murdered by the Indians if left there alone.

"Perhaps," he said, after some hesitation, "we'd better carry you far enough to get you out of the Indian country."

"Only five miles!" pleaded Doran.

"Jump in!" replied the manager.

The two men thanked Mellen effusively, but there was a crafty, scheming look in Doran's eyes which told plainly enough that he intended to take advantage of the kindness of the manager at the very first opportunity.

Sam saw the evil expression and placed the automatic within easy reach of his hand. Doran saw the movement and snarled out an oath.

"There's no need for you to make any gun-play!" he scowled.

"When I see a snake," declared Sam, "I don't take any chances on being bitten! I know pretty well the kind of a sneak you are."

"Look here!" exclaimed Doran, appealing to Mellen, "why don't you take us back to Quito and

make complaint against us for stealing the machine? It seems to me that that is the correct thing for you to do!"

Mellen considered this proposition gravely for a moment. He believed now that Doran was in some way mixed up in a conspiracy against the boys. When considered in connection with Mr. Havens' telegrams to Ben and himself, the actions of the two men seemed significant. In fact, the manager believed that the trouble refered to in Mr. Havens' messages had already made its appearance, guided by the hand of Doran!

It seemed to him that the man's plea was entirely reasonable, and yet he understood that the fellows ought to be kept out of Quito as long as possible. Even in jail, held only on a charge of grand larceny, Doran would have little difficulty in securing a lawyer and communicating with such other desperadoes as might be concerned in the conspiracy.

"The savages," Doran went on, pleadingly, "are scattered all through this country, from the Colombia boundary line to Peru. It would be plain murder to leave us here at this time!"

"I half believe the man is right!" Sam agreed.

"You know I am right!" insisted Doran.

The matter was one which Mellen hesitated to decide. He believed that, by taking Doran to Quito, he would place the boys in some unknown peril; and he believed, too, that by leaving the two men in the mountains he might be contributing to their murder.

"What do you think about it?" he asked, turning to Sam.

"I wouldn't turn a thieving dog over to those savages!" was the reply.

"No civilized human being would!" Doran exclaimed.

"Very well," Mellen replied. "I'll take you to the police office at Quito and ask to have you locked up on a charge of grand larceny."

"That will be satisfactory," answered Doran.

While entirely satisfied with the decision which had been reached, both Mellen and Sam did not fully trust the two prisoners. They believed that at some time during the return trip an attempt at escape would be made. The two pretended to be very much interested in the aeroplanes, which were almost constantly in sight, yet Mellen saw that they

inspected the trail eagerly as if looking for some soft place to land.

Believing that the men would attempt to leave the motor-car only when within a short distance of Quito, the two did not watch them as closely as they might have done. The attempt came when the car had covered only about half the distance between the camp and the city.

The chauffeur was coasting down a very steep declivity with the brakes well in hand and Mellen and Sam were clinging tightly to the sides of the machine when Doran sprang to his feet and leaped.

His companion attempted to follow his example, but Sam's hand was laid upon his shoulder at that instant, and the two tumbled into the bottom of the car. The struggle there was of short duration, for Sam was a muscular fellow and the other combatant was not inclined to put up much of a fight. Mellen watched the struggle with a smile.

It was impossible to stop the car on the steep grade, and so Mellen and Sam were obliged to remain inactive while Doran struggled to his feet and shook his fist at the car uttering as he did so threats of vengeance.

CHAPTER IX.

A FINE CURTAIN-RAISER.

THE sun was rising over the mountains when the flying machines and the motor-car reached the field where the boys had landed the night before. After the escape of Doran, the aeroplanes had searched the hills and gorges for the fugitive, but had found no trace of him observable from the sky.

After seeing that the machines were placed in charge of capable and loyal officers, the boys entered the car with Mellen and were driven to the hotel. When they reached the entrance they found a little crowd assembled in the lobby.

Messengers from the telegraph office were passing out and in, and the clerk seemed to be answering a good many questions by 'phone. Mellen stopped at the office counter while the boys took the elevator for their rooms unobserved by the clerk in the office.

"There's something strange going on here!"

the clerk exclaimed, as Mr. Mellen stepped up. "We have a sheaf of telegrams for you, and a lot more for those boys who came here last night."

"Well," smiled the manager, "you may as well deliver them."

"Deliver them?" repeated the clerk. "How are we going to deliver them? You can receipt now for the ones which belong to you," he went on, "but what are we going to do with those directed to the boys?"

"Why, deliver them!" answered Mellen.

"But the boys left the hotel last night!" replied the clerk angrily. "Without paying their bills!"

"But they are in their rooms now," Mellen assured the clerk.

"And they stole woolen blankets off the bed, too!" the clerk almost shouted. "I ought to have them all arrested!"

As the clerk uttered the words in a loud tone a slender, black-eyed man who seemed to Mellen to move about the corridor with the sinuous undulations of a snake, stepped up to the desk.

"So the fugitives have returned?" he asked. "Shall I arrest them at once? You have made the charge, you know!"

"You will find the blankets in the boys' room," advised Mellen. "They took them because they had a long, cold ride before them."

"It is policy to restore stolen goods after discovery!" snarled the man who had asked instructions of the clerk, and who occupied the very honorable position of house detective.

"Look here, Gomez!" exclaimed Mellen. "You keep out of this! The boys had a right to use the blankets outside of the hotel as well as inside."

"I shall do as the clerk says!" snarled the detective.

"Oh, I suppose we'll have to let it go if they've brought the blankets back!" replied the clerk, reluctantly.

Gomez turned away with a sullen frown on his face, and Mellen saw that he had made an enemy of the fellow.

"These boys are your friends?" asked the clerk of Mellen.

"I never saw them until last night," was the reply, "but I know that they belong to the party of which Louis Havens, the millionaire aviator, is the head. I presume the telegrams waiting for me

here are from Mr. Havens, who expects to be here within twenty-four hours."

"Not Louis Havens, the great explorer?" asked the clerk.

"The same," answered Mellen, "and if you've anything more to say about the boys, say it to him."

Taking the telegrams from the clerk, Mellen went back to the machine and, after leaving the prisoner with the police, hastened to Ben's room, where the other boys were assembled. As he had supposed, the messages were all from Mr. Havens, and all were repetitions of the warning which had been sent the previous night.

"I don't understand what it means!" Ben said after the messages had been read and discussed. "But it is a sure thing that Mr. Havens knows what he is talking about."

"I think we'd all better go and get a square meal and go to bed!" Jimmie observed, rubbing his eyes. "The next time I get up in the night to take a twenty-mile ride in the air, I won't."

"That's very good sense," Mellen agreed. "These telegrams, as you see, state that Mr. Havens cannot possibly reach Quito until some time to-night."

"Then we can have a good sleep!" Carl agreed. "And sit up all night again if we want to."

"It hasn't been such a bad night!" Ben observed. "If we had only kept Doran, everything would be in pretty good shape now."

"What did the chief of police say when you turned the other gink over to him?" asked Carl. "He locked him up, didn't he?"

"Yes, he locked him up!" answered Mellen. "But, before I left the station, I saw the fellow at the 'phone and I presume he is out on bail by this time. The police have no recourse if bail is offered."

"Then I'll tell you what you do!" advised Ben. "If he is admitted to bail, you hire a private detective and have him watched. He is sure to meet with Doran before very long. He may go to the hills to consult with him, or Doran may come to the city, but the two fellows are certain to come together! Then Doran can be arrested."

"That's a good idea," Mellen answered, "and I'll attend to the matter as soon as I get back to my office. Now, we'll all go down to a restaurant and have breakfast. I'm hungry myself just now."

"What's the matter with the hotel?" asked Ben.

Mellen did not care to explain to the boys exactly what had taken place down stairs, but he felt that they would be treated with suspicion as long as they remained there, so he decided to ask them to change their quarters as soon as they returned from breakfast.

Making the reply that the morning *table d'hote* at the hotel was not suitable for hungry boys who had been up all night, Mellen went with the lads to a first-class restaurant. After breakfast he suggested a change of hotels, saying only that they had already attracted too much attention at the one where they were stopping, and the boys agreed without argument. It took only a short time to locate in the new quarters, and the boys were soon sound asleep.

When Ben awoke, some one was knocking at his door, and directly he heard a low chuckle which betrayed the presence of Jimmie in the corridor.

"Get a move on!" the latter shouted.

"What's up?" asked Ben.

"Time's up!" replied Jimmie.

"Open up!" almost yelled Carl.

Ben sprang out of bed, half-dressed himself, and opened the door. The first face he saw was that

of Mr. Havens, who looked dusty and tired as if from a long journey.

As may be imagined, the greetings between the two were very cordial. In a moment the boys all flocked into Ben's room, where Mr. Havens was advised to freshen up in the bath before entering upon the business in hand.

"You must have had a merry old time with the *Ann,*" laughed Ben.

"Never saw anything like it!" exclaimed Mr. Havens.

"Did she break down?"

"Half a dozen times!"

"Perhaps there was some good reason for it," suggested Glenn, significantly.

"Indeed there was!" answered Mr. Havens.

"Couldn't you catch him?" asked Jimmie.

"I could not!" was the reply.

While the millionaire remained in the bath-room, the boys discussed all manner of surmises concerning the accidents which had happened to the *Ann.* They had not yet heard a word of explanation from Mr. Havens concerning the warnings of trouble which had been received by wire, but they understood that the interferences to the big aero-

plane were only part of the general trouble scheme which seemed to have broken loose the night before. Finally they all gave up the problem.

"We don't know anything about it!" exclaimed Jimmie. "And we won't know anything about it until Mr. Havens gets cleaned up and tells us, so we may as well talk about hens, or white bulldogs, until he gets ready to open up. By the way," the boy continued, "where is Sam?"

"Mellen took him down to get him into decent clothes," Ben answered.

"Is he coming back here?" asked Jimmie. "I rather like that fellow."

"Of course he's coming back!" Ben replied. "He's hasn't got any other place to go! He's flat broke and hungry."

"I thought perhaps he wouldn't like to meet Mr. Havens," Jimmie commented, with a wink at Carl.

"And why not?" asked Ben, somewhat amazed.

Then the story of Sam Weller's previous employment at the hangar on Long Island came out. The boys all declared that they wanted to be present when Sam met his former employer!

"I don't care what you about Sam!" Jimmie de-

clared, after the boys had finished their discussion of the Long Island incident. "I like him just the same! There's a kind of a free and easy impudence about him that gets me. I hope he'll stay with us!"

"He might ride with Mr. Havens in the *Ann!*" laughed Carl.

"Well, I don't believe Mr. Havens would object, at that!" declared Jimmie.

"Certainly he wouldn't object!" replied the millionaire, coming out of the bath-room door with a smile on his face. "And so Sam Weller showed up here, did he?" he asked as he seated himself. "The boy is a first-class aviator, but he used to get his little finger up above his nose too often, so I had to let him go. Did he tell any of you boys how he happened to drift into this section?"

"He told me," Jimmie replied, "that he was making a leisurely trip from the Isthmus of Panama to Cape Horn. He looked the part, too, for I guess he hadn't had a square meal for several decades, and his clothes looked as if they had been collected out of a rag-bag!"

"He's a resourceful chap!" Mr. Havens continued. "He's a first-class aviator, as I said, in

every way, except that he is not dependable, and that of course spoils everything."

"He's got the nerve!" Carl observed.

"He certainly has!" agreed Jimmie..

"Well," Mr. Havens said in a moment, "if you boys like Sam, we'll take him along. We have room for one more in the party."

"And that brings us down to business!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Right here," he went on, "is where we want you to turn on the spot light. We've had so many telegrams referring to trouble that we're beginning to think that Trouble is our middle name!"

"Perhaps we would better wait until Mellen and Sam return," suggested Mr. Havens. "That will save telling the story two or three times."

"Is Sam Weller really his name?" asked Jimmie.

"I don't think so," answered Havens. "I think it is merely a name he selected out of the Pickwick Papers. While in my employ on Long Island several people who knew him by another name called to visit with him. Now and then I questioned these visitors, but secured little information."

"Perhaps he's a Pittsburg Millionaire or a Grand

Duke in disguise!" suggested Carl. "And again," the boy went on, "he may be merely the black sheep in some very fine family."

"There's something a little strange about the boy," Mr. Havens agreed, "but I have never felt myself called upon to examine into his antecedents."

"Here he comes now!" cried Carl. "With a new suit of clothes on his back and a smile lying like a benediction all over his clean shave!"

The boys were glad to see that the millionaire greeted Sam as an old friend. For his part, Sam extended his hand to his former employer and answered questions as if he had left his employ with strong personal letters of recommendation to every crowned head in the world!

"And now for the story," Mellen said after all were seated.

"And when you speak of trouble," Jimmie broke in, "always spell it with a big 'T', for that's the way it opened out on us!"

"I'm going to begin right at the beginning," Mr. Havens said, with a smile, "and the beginning begins two years ago."

"Gee!" exclaimed Jimmie. "That's a long

time for trouble to lie in wait before jumping out at a fellow!"

"In fact," Mr. Havens went on, "the case we have now been dumped into, heels over head, started in New York City two years ago, when Milo Redfern, cashier of the Invincible Trust Company, left the city with a half million dollars belonging to the depositors."

"That's a good curtain lifter!" exclaimed Carl. "When you open a drama with a thief and a half million dollars, you've started something!"

CHAPTER X.

WHERE THE TROUBLE BEGAN.

"When Redfern disappeared," Mr. Havens went on, "we employed the best detective talent in America to discover his whereabouts and bring him back. The best detective talent in America failed."

"That ain't the way they put it in stories!" Carl cut in.

"We spent over a hundred thousand dollars trying to bring the thief to punishment, and all we had to show for this expenditure at the end of the year was a badly spelled letter written—at least mailed—on the lower East Side in New York, conveying the information that Redfern was hiding somewhere in the mountains of Peru."

"There you go!" exclaimed Ben. "The last time we went out on a little excursion through the atmosphere, we got mixed up with a New York murder case, and also with Chinese smugglers, and

now it seems that we've got an embezzlement case to handle."

"Embezzlement case looks good to me!" shouted Jimmie.

"Hiding in the mountains of Peru?" repeated Sam. "Now I wonder if a man hiding in the mountains of Peru has loyal friends or well-paid agents in the city of Quito."

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Havens. "Sam has hit the nail on the head the first crack. I never even told the boys when they left New York that they were bound for Peru on a mission in which I was greatly interested. I thought that perhaps they would get along better and have a merrier time if they were not loaded down with official business."

"That wouldn't have made any difference!" announced Carl. "We'd have gone right along having as much fun as if we were in our right minds!"

"When I started away from the hangar in the *Ann,*" Mr. Havens continued, with a smile at the interruption, "I soon saw that some one in New York was interested in my remaining away from Peru."

"Redfern's friends of course!" suggested Mellen.

"Exactly!" replied the millionaire.

"And Redfern's friends appeared on the scene last night, too," Jimmie decided. "And they managed to make quite a hit on their first appearance, too," he continued. "And this man Doran is at present ready for another engagement if you please. He's a foxy chap!"

"I'm sorry he got away!" Mellen observed.

"Yes, it's too bad," Mr. Havens agreed, "but, in any event, we couldn't have kept him in prison here isolated from his friends."

"There's one good thing about it," Ben observed, "and that is that we've already set a trap to catch him."

"How's that?" asked the millionaire.

"Mr. Mellen has employed a detective to follow Doran's companion on the theory that sometime, somewhere, the two will get together again."

"That's a very good idea!" Mr. Havens declared.

"Now about this man Redfern," Mr. Mellen went on. "Is he believed to be still in the mountains of Peru?"

"I have at least one very good reason for supposing so," answered the millionaire. "Yes, I think he is still there."

"Give us the good reason!" exclaimed Carl. "I guess we want to know how to size things up as we go along!"

"The very good reason is this," replied Mr. Havens with a smile, "the minute we started in our airships for the mountains of Peru, obstacles began to gather in our way. The friends or accomplices of Redfern began to flutter the instant we headed toward Peru."

"That strikes me as being a good and sufficient reason for believing that he is still there!" Mellen commented.

"Yes, I think it is!" replied the millionaire. "And it is an especially good reason," he went on, "when you understand that all our previous plans and schemes for Redfern's capture have never evoked the slightest resistence."

"Then the embezzler is in Peru, all right, all right!" laughed Carl.

"But Peru is a very large country," suggested Mr. Havens.

"There's a good deal of land in the country,"

agreed Jimmie. "When you come to measure the soil that stands up on end, I guess you'd find Peru about as large as the United States of America!"

"What are the prospects?" asked Mellen. "What I mean," he continued, "is this: Can you put your finger on any one spot on the map of Peru and say—look there first for Redfern."

"Yes," replied Mr. Havens, "I think I can. If you ask me to do it, I'll just cover Lake Titicaca with my thumb and tell you to pull Redfern out of the water as soon as you get to that part of old Incaland!"

"Je-rusalem!" exclaimed Jimmie. "And that takes us right down to the haunted temple!"

"What kind of a lake is this Titicaca?" asked Glenn.

"Don't you ever read anything except base-ball stories and police court records?" asked Ben, turning to his friend. "Before I was seven years old I knew that Lake Titicaca is larger than Lake Erie; that it is five inches higher in the summer than in the winter, and that the longer you keep a piece of iron or steel in it the brighter it will become."

"Is it a fact that the waters of this lake do not rust metal?" asked Mellen. "That seems to me to be a peculiar circumstance.

"I have often heard it stated as a fact," replied Mr. Havens.

"Ask any one who knows, if you won't believe me," Ben went on with a provoking smile. "It is said that Lake Titicaca represents the oldest civilization in the world. There are temples built of stones larger than those used in the pyramids of Egypt. The stones have remained in position after a century because of the nicety with which they are fitted together. It is said to be impossible to drive the finest needle between the seams of the walls composed of granite rocks."

"But what did they want to build such temples and fortresses for?" demanded Jimmie. Why didn't they spend more time playing base-ball?"

"You're a nut on base-ball!" laughed Ben.

"The temples which exist to-day were there when the Incas settled the country," the boy continued. "They knew no more of their origin than we do at this time!"

"They may be a million years old!" exclaimed Carl.

"Perhaps that's as good a guess as any," replied Ben. "We don't know how old they are, and never shall know.

"Isn't it a little remarkable," said Mellen, "that an act of embezzlement committed in New York City more than two years ago should lead to a visit to ruined temples in Peru?"

"Now about this Lake Titicaca, about which Ben has given us a bit of history," Mr. Havens

said, after replying briefly to Mellen's question. "We have every reason to believe that Redfern has been living in some of the ancient structures bordering the lake."

"Did you ever try to unearth the East Side person who wrote the letter you have just referred to?" asked Ben.

"We have spent thousands of dollars in quest of that person," replied the millionaire, "and all to no purpose."

"And what do we do to-morrow?" asked Jimmie, breaking into the conversation in true boy-fashion.

"Why, we're going to start for Peru!" cried Carl.

"And the haunted temples!" laughed Ben. "Honest, boys," he went on, "I don't believe there's anything in this haunted temple yarn. There may be temples which are being guarded from the ravages of the superstitious by interested persons who occasionally play the ghost, but so far as any supernatural manifestations are concerned the idea is ridiculous."

"Don't you ever say anything like that in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca," Mellen suggested. "If you do, the natives will suddenly discover that you are robbers, bent on plunder, and some night, your bodies may find a resting-place at the bottom of the lake."

"Do they really believe the temples to be haunted?" asked Glenn.

"There are people in whose interest the superstition is kept up," replied Ben. "These interested people would doubtless gladly perform the stunt just suggested by Mellen."

"I think I've got the combination now!" Jimmie laughed. "See if I'm right. The temples still hold stores of gold, and those searching for the treasure are keeping adventuous people away by making the ghost walk."

"That's the idea!" Ben replied.

"And, look here!" Sam broke in. "Why shouldn't this man Redfern have a choice collection of ghosts of his own?"

"That's an idea, too," Mr. Havens remarked.

"I'll bet he has!" Jimmie insisted.

"Then we'll examine the homes of the ghosts first," grinned Jimmie. "We'll walk up to the portal and say: 'Mr. Ghost, if you'll materialize Redfern, we'll give you half of the reward offered for him by the trust company.' That ought to bring him, don't you think?"

"And here's another idea," Sam interrupted. "If Redfern has ghosts in the temple in which he is hiding—if he really is hiding in a Peruvian temple—his ghosts will be the most active ghosts on the job. In other words, we'll hear more about his haunted

temple than any other haunted temple in all Peru. His ghosts will be in a constant state of eruption!"

"And that's another good idea," suggested Mr. Havens.

"Oh, Sam is wise all right," Jimmie went on. "I knew that the minute he told me about unearthing the provisions in the tent before he knew whether the savages were coming back!"

"Gentlemen," began Sam, with one of his smooth smiles, "I was so hungry that I didn't much care whether the savages came back or not. It appeared to me then that the last morsel of food that had passed my lips had exhausted itself at a period farther away than the birth of Adam!"

"You must have been good and hungry!" laughed Mellen.

"What did you wander off into that country for?" asked Jimmie. "You might have known better."

"I couldn't remain in the Canal Zone," replied Sam, "because no one would give me a job. Everybody seemed to want to talk to me for my own good. Even the chief in charge of the Gatun dam contract told me——"

"Do you know the chief in charge of the Gatun dam contract?" asked Havens, casually. "You spoke of him a moment ago as if you had met him personally."

"Well, you see," Sam went on, hesitatingly, "you see I just happened to——"

The confusion of the young man was so great that no further questions were asked of him at that time, but all understood that he had inadvertently lifted a curtain which revealed previous acquaintance with men like the chief in charge of the Gatun dam. The boy certainly was a mystery, and they all decided to learn the truth about him before parting company.

"Well," Mr. Havens said, breaking a rather oppressive silence, "are we all ready for the roof of the world to-morrow?"

"You bet we're all ready!" cried Jimmie.

"I'm ready right now!" exclaimed Carl.

"Will you go with us, Sam?" asked Mr. Havens.

"I should be glad to!" was the relpy.

No more was said on the subject at that time, yet all saw by the expression on the tramp's face how grateful he was for this new chance in life which Mr. Havens had given him.

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Jimmie in a moment, jumping to his feet and rushing toward the door. "I've forgotten something!"

"Something important?" asked Ben.

"Important? I should say so!" replied Jimmie. "I forgot to eat my dinner, and I haven't had any supper yet!"

"How did you come to do it?" asked Mellen.

"I didn't wake up!" was the reply. "And now," the boy went on, "you see I've got to go and eat two meals all at once."

"I'll eat one of them for you," suggested Sam.

"And I'll eat the other!" volunteered Ben.

"Yes you will," grinned Jimmie. "I don't need any help when it comes to supplying the region under my belt with provisions."

The boys hustled away to the dining-room, it being then about seven o'clock, while Mr. Havens and Mellen hastened back to the manager's office.

Passing through the public lobby, the manager entered his private room and opened a sheaf of telegrams lying on the table.

One of the messages was for Mr. Havens. He read it carefully, twice over, and then turned a startled face toward the manager.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER TROPICAL STARS.

THE manager glanced at the millionaire's startled face for a moment and then asked, his voice showing sympathy rather than curiosity:

"Unpleasant news, Mr. Havens?"

"Decidedly so!" was the reply.

The millionaire studied over the telegram for a moment and then laid it down in front of the manager.

"Read it!" he said.

The message was brief and ran as follows:

"Ralph Hubbard murdered last night! Private key to deposit box A missing from his desk!"

"Except for the information that some one has been murdered," Mellen said, restoring the telegram to its owner," this means little or nothing to me. I don't think I ever knew Ralph Hubbard!"

"Ralph Hubbard," replied the millionaire gravely, "was my private secretary at the office of the Invincible Trust Company, New York. All the papers

and information collected concerning the search for Milo Redfern passed through his hands. In fact, the letter purporting to have been written and mailed on the lower East Side of New York was addressed to him personally, but in my care."

"And deposit box A?" asked Mellen. "Pardon me," he added in a moment, "I don't seek to pry into your private affairs, but the passing of the telegram to me seemed to indicate a desire on your part to take me into your confidence in this matter."

"Deposit box A," replied the millionaire, "contained every particle of information we possess concerning the whereabouts of Milo Redfern."

"I see!" replied Mellen. "I see exactly why you consider the murder and robbery so critically important at this time."

"I have not only lost my friend," Mr. Havens declared, "but it seems to me at this time that I have also lost all chance of bringing Redfern to punishment."

"I'm sorry," consoled Mellen.

"I don't know what to do now," the millionaire exclaimed. "With the information contained in deposit box A in their possession, the associates of Redfern may easily frustrate any move we may make in Peru."

"So it seems!" mused Mellen. "But this man Redfern is still a person of considerable importance! Men who have passed out of the range of human

activities seldom have power to compel the murder of an enemy many hundreds of miles away."

"I have always believed," Mr. Havens continued, "that the money embezzled by Redfern was largely used in building up an institution which seeks to rival the Invincible Trust Company."

"In that case," the manager declared, "the whole power and influence of this alleged rival would be directed toward the continued absence from New York of Redfern."

"Exactly!" the millionaire answered.

"Then why not look in New York first?" asked Mellen.

"Until we started away on this trip," was the reply, "we had nothing to indicate that the real clew to the mystery lay in New York."

"Did deposit box A contain papers connecting Redfern's embezzlement with any of the officials of the new trust company?" asked the manager.

"Certainly!" was the reply.

The manager gave a low whistle of amazement and turned to his own telegrams. The millionaire sat brooding in his chair for a moment and then left the room. At the door of the building, he met Sam Weller.

"Mr. Havens," the young man said, drawing the millionaire aside, "I want permission to use one of your machines for a short time to-night."

"Granted!" replied Mr. Havens with a smile.

"I've got an idea," Sam continued, "that I can pick up valuable information between now and morning. I may have to make a long flight, and so I'd like to take one of the boys with me if you do not object."

"They'll all want to go," suggested the millionaire.

"I know that," laughed Sam, "and they've been asleep all day, and will be prowling around asking questions while I'm getting ready to leave. I don't exactly know how I'm going to get rid of them."

"Which machine do you want?" asked Mr. Havens.

"The *Ann,* sir, if it's all the same to you."

"You're quite welcome to her," the millionaire returned.

"Well, then, with your permission," continued Sam, "I'll smuggle Jimmie out to the field and we'll be on our way. The machine has plenty of gasoline on board, I take it, and is perfect in other ways?"

"I believe her to be in perfect condition, and well supplied with fuel," was the answer. "She's the fastest machine in the world right now."

Sam started away, looking anything but a tramp in his new clothes, but turned back in a moment and faced his employer.

"If we shouldn't be back by morning," he said, then, "don't do any worrying on our account Start south in your machines and you'll be certain

to pick us up somewhere between Quito and Lake Titicaca. If you don't pick us up within a day or two," the boy continued in a hesitating tone, "you'll find a letter addressed to yourself at the local post-office."

"Look here, Sam," suggested Mr. Havens, "why don't you tell me a little more about yourself and your people?"

"Sometime, perhaps, but not now," was the reply. "The letter, you understand," he continued, "is not to be opened until you have reasonable proof of my death."

"I understand!" the millionaire answered. "But here's another thing," he added, "you say that we may find you between Quito and Lake Titicaca. Are you acquainted with that region?"

"Well, I know something about it!" replied Sam. "You see," he continued, "when I left your employ in the disgraceful manner which will at once occur to you, I explained to Old Civilization that she might go and hang herself for all of me. I ducked into the wilderness, and since that time I've spent many weeks along what is known as the roof of the world in Peru."

"I wish you luck in your undertaking!" Mr. Havens said as the young man turned away, "and the only advice I give you at parting is that you take good care of yourself and Jimmie and enter upon no unnecessary risks!"

"That's good advice, too!" smiled Sam, and the two parted with a warm clasp of the hands.

After leaving the millionaire aviator at the telegraph office, Sam hastened to the hotel where the boys were quartered and called Jimmie out of the little group in Ben's room. They talked for some moments in the corridor, and then Jimmie thrust his head in at the half-open door long enough to announce that he was going out with Sam to view the city. The boys were all on their feet in an instant.

"Me, too!" shouted Ben.

"You can't lose me!" cried Carl.

Glenn was at the door ready for departure with the others.

"No, no!" said Sam shaking his head. "Jimmie and I are just going out for a little stroll. Unfortunately I can take only one person besides myself into some of the places where I am going."

The boys shut the door with a bang, leaving Carl on the outside. The lad turned the knob of the door and opened and closed it to give the impression that he, too, had returned to the apartment. Then he moved softly down the corridor and, still keeping out of sight, followed Sam and Jimmie out in the direction of the field where the machines had been left.

The two conversed eagerly, sometimes excitedly, during the walk, but of course, Carl could hear nothing of what was being said. There was quite a

crowd assembled around the machines, and so Carl had little difficulty in keeping out of sight as he stepped close to the *Ann*. After talking for a moment or two with one of the officers in charge of the machines, Sam and Jimmie leaped into the seats and pushed the starter.

As they did so Jimmie felt a clutch at his shoulders, and then a light body settled itself in the rather large seat beside him.

"You thought you'd get away, didn't you?" grinned Carl.

"Look here!" shouted Jimmie as the powerful machine swept across the field and lifted into the air, "you can't go with us!"

"Oh, I can't?" mocked Carl. "I don't know how you're going to put me off! You don't want to stop the machine now, of course!"

"But, see here!" insisted Jimmie, "we're going on a dangerous mission! We're likely to butt into all kinds of trouble. And, besides," he continued, "Sam has provisions for only two. You'll have to go hungry if you travel with us. We've only five or six meals with us!"

"So you're planning a long trip, eh?" scoffed Carl. "What will the boys say about your running off in this style?"

"Oh, keep still!" replied Jimmie. "We're going off on a mission for Mr. Havens! You never should have butted in!"

"Oh, let him go!" laughed Sam, as the clamor of the motors gradually made conversation impossible. "Perhaps he'll freeze to death and drop off before long. I guess we've got food enough!"

There was no moon in the sky as yet, but the tropical stars looked down with surprising brilliancy. The country below lay spread out like a great map. As the lights of Quito faded away in the distance, dark mountain gorges which looked like giant gashes in the face of mother earth, mountain cones which seemed to seek companionship with the stars themselves, and fertile valleys green because of the presence of mountain streams, swept by sharply and with the rapidity of scenes in a motion-picture house.

As had been said, the *Ann* had been constructed for the private use of the millionaire aviator, and was considered by experts to be the strongest and swiftest aeroplane in the world. On previous tests she had frequently made as high as one hundred miles an hour on long trips. The motion of the monster machine in the air was so stable that the millionaire had often taken prizes for endurance which entitled him to medals for uninterrupted flights.

Jimmie declares to this day that the fastest express train which ever traveled over the gradeless lines of mother earth had nothing whatever on the flight of the *Ann* that night! Although Sam kept the machine down whenever possible, there were

places where high altitudes were reached in crossing cone summits and mountain chains.

At such times the temperature was so low that the boys shivered in their seat, and more than once Jimmie and Carl protested by signs and gestures against such high sailing.

At two o'clock when the moon rose, bringing every detail of the country into bold relief, Sam circled over a green valley and finally brought the aeroplane down to a rest hardly more than four thousand feet above sea-level. It was warm here, of course, and the two boys almost dropped from their seat as the fragrant air of the grass-grown valley reached their nostrils. While Sam busied himself with the running gear of the flying machine, Jimmie and Carl sprawled out on the lush grass and compared notes. The moonlight struck the valley so as to illuminate its western rim while the eastern surface where the machine lay was still heavy in shadows.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Jimmie, lifting himself on one elbow and gazing at the wrinkled cones standing all around the valley. "I wonder how Sam ever managed to drop into this cosy little nest without breaking all our necks."

Sam, who seemed to be unaffected by the cold and the strain of the long flight, stood, oil-can in hand, when the question was asked. In a moment he walked over to where the boys lay.

"I can tell you about that," he said with a smile. "Not long ago I had a job running an old ice-wagon of an aeroplane over this country for a naturalist. We passed this spot several times, and at last came back here for a rest. Not to put too fine a point upon it, as Micawber would say, we remained here so long that I became thoroughly acquainted with the country. It is a lonesome little valley, but a pleasant one."

"Well, what did we come here for?" asked Carl, in a moment, "and how far are we from Quito? Seems like a thousand miles!"

"We are something like four hundred miles from the capital city of Ecuador," Sam replied, "and the reason why we landed here will be disclosed when you chase yourselves along the valley and turn to the right around the first cliff and come face to face with the cunningest little lake you ever saw, also the haunted temple which stands there!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAUNTED TEMPLE.

"A HAUNTED temple?" echoed Jimmie. "I thought the haunted temples were a lot farther south."

"There are haunted temples all over Peru, if you leave it to the natives," answered Sam. "Whenever there is a reason for keeping strangers away from such ruins as we are about to visit, the ghosts come forth at night in white robes and wave weird lights above skeleton faces."

"Quit it!" cried Carl. "I've got the creeps running up and down my back right now! Bring me my haunted temples by daylight!"

"Yes," scorned Jimmie, "we'll bring you a little pet ghost in a suit-case. That would be about your size!"

"Honest," grinned the boy, "I'm scared half to death."

"What's the specialty of the ghosts who inhabit this ruined temple?" asked Jimmie. "Can't you give us some idea of their antics?"

"If I remember correctly," Sam replied, with a laugh, "the specialty of the spirits to whom I am about to introduce you consists of low, soft music. How does that suit?"

"I tell you to quit it!" cried Carl.

"After I prepare the aeroplane for another run," Sam went on, with a grin, "I'll take you around to the temple, if you like."

"Mother of Moses!" cried Carl. "My hair's all on end now, and I won't dare look into a mirror in the morning for fear I'll find it turned white."

"There's a strange feeling in my system, too!" Jimmie declared, "but I think it comes from a lack of sustenance."

"Jimmie," declared Carl reproachfully, "I believe you would pick the pocket of a wailing ghost of a ham sandwich, if he had such a thing about him!"

"Sure I would!" answered the boy. "What would a ghost want of a ham sandwich? In those old days the people didn't eat pork anyway. If you read the history of those days, you'll find no mention of the wriggly little worms which come out of pigs and made trouble for the human race."

"Well, if you're ready now," Sam broke in, "we'll take a walk around the corner of the cliff and see if the ghosts are keeping open house to-night."

"You really don't believe in these ghosts, do you?" asked Jimmie.

"I do not!" was the reply.

"There ain't no such animal, is there?" asked Carl.

"I have never witnessed any 'supernatural' things," Sam answered, "which could not be traced eventually to some human agency. Usually to some interested human agency."

"Well," grinned Carl, "if there ain't any ghosts at this ruined temple, what's the use of my going there to see them?"

"You may remain and watch the machine if you care to?" Sam replied. "While we are supposed to be in a valley rarely frequented by human kind, it may be just as well to leave some one on guard. For instance," the young man went on, "a jaguar might come along and eat up the motors!"

"Jaguars?" exclaimed Carl. "Are they the leopard-like animals that chase wild horses off the pampas of Brazil, and devour men whenever they get particularly hungry?"

"The same!" smiled Sam.

"Then I want to see the ghosts!" exclaimed Carl.

"Come along, then," advised Sam.

"If you didn't know Carl right well," Jimmie explained, as they walked along, "you'd really think he'd tremble at the sight of a ghost or a wild animal, but he's the most reckless little idiot in the whole bunch! He'll talk about being afraid, and

then he'll go and do things that any boy in his right mind ought not to think of doing."

"I had an idea that that was about the size of it!" smiled Sam.

Presently the party turned the angle of the cliff and came upon a placid little mountain lake which lay glistening under the moonlight.

"Now, where's your ruined temple?" asked Carl.

"At the southern end of the lake," was the reply.

"I see it!" cried Jimmie. "There's a great white stone that might have formed part of a tower at one time, and below it is an opening which looks like an entrance to the New York subway with the lights turned off."

The old temple at the head of the lake had frequently been visited by scientists and many descriptions of it had been written. It stood boldly out on a headland which extended into the clear waters, and had evidently at one time been surrounded by gardens.

"I don't see anything very mysterious about that!" Carl remarked. "It looks to me as if contractors had torn down a cheap old building in order to erect a skyscraper on the site, and then been pulled off the job."

"Wait until you get to it!" warned Jimmie.

"I'm listening right now for the low, soft music!" laughed Carl.

"Does any one live there?" asked Jimmie in a moment.

"As the place is thought by the natives to be haunted," Sam answered, "the probability is that no one has set foot inside the place since the naturalist and myself explored its ruined corridors several weeks ago."

The boys passed farther on toward the temple, and at last paused on the north side of a little arm of the lake which would necessitate a wide detour to the right.

From the spot where they stood, the walls of the temple glittered as if at sometime in the distant past they had been ornamented with designs in silver and gold. The soft wind of the valley sighed through the openings mournfully, and it required no vigorous exercise of the imagination to turn the sounds into man-made music.

The boys looked at each other significantly.

"Come on, Jimmie," Carl shouted. "Let's go and get a front seat. The concert is just about to begin!"

"There is no hurry!" Jimmy answered.

While the three stood viewing the scene, one which never passed from their memory, a tall, stately figure passed out of the entrance to the old temple and moved with dignified leisure toward the margin of the lake.

"Now, who's that?" demanded Carl.

"The names of the characters appear on the program in the order of their entrance!" suggested Jimmie.

"Honest, boys," Sam whispered, "I think you fellows deserve a medal apiece. Instead of being awed and frightened, standing as you do in the presence of the old temple, and seeing, as you do, the mysterious figure moving about, one would think you were occupying seats at a minstrel show!"

"You said yourself," insisted Jimmie, "that there wasn't any such thing as ghosts."

"That's right," exclaimed Carl. "What's the use of getting scared at something that doesn't exist?"

"The only question in my mind at the present time," Jimmie went on, with a grin, "is just this: Is that fellow over there carrying a gun?"

While the boys talked in whispers, Sam had been moving slowly to the west so as to circle the little cove which separated him from the temple.

In a moment the boys saw him beckoning them to him and pointing toward the ruins opposite.

The figure which had been before observed was now standing close to the lip of the lake, waving his hands aloft, as if in adoration or supplication. This posture lasted only a second and then the figure disappeared as if by magic.

There were the smooth waters of the lake with

the ruined temple for a background. There were the moonbeams bringing every detail of the scene into strong relief. Nothing had changed, except that the person who a moment before had stood in full view had disappeared as if the earth had opened at his feet.

"Now what do you think of that?" demanded Jimmie.

"Say," chuckled Carl, "do you think that fellow is custodian of the temple, and has to do that stunt every night, the same as a watchman in New York has to turn a key in a clock every hour?"

Jimmie nudged his chum in the ribs in appreciation of the observation, and then stood silent, his eyes fixed on the broken tower across the cove.

While he looked a red light burned for an instant at the apex of the old tower, and in an instant was followed by a blue light farther up on the cliff. The boys remained silent, wondering.

"You didn't answer my question," Carl insisted, in a moment. "Do you think they pull off this stunt here every night?"

"Oh, keep still!" exclaimed Jimmie. "They don't have to pull it off every night. They only put the play on when there's an audience."

"An audience?" repeated Carl. How do they know they've got an audience?"

"Chump!" replied Jimmie scornfully. "Do you think any one can sail an aeroplane like the *Ann*

over this country without its being seen? Of course they know they've got an audience."

By this time the boys had advanced to the place where Sam was standing. They found that young man very much interested in the proceedings, and also very much inclined to silence.

"Did you see anything like that when you were here before?" asked Jimmie. "Did they put the same kind of a show on for you?"

Sam shook his head gravely.

"Well, come on!" Carl cried. "Let's chase around the cove and get those front seats you spoke about."

"Wait, boys!" Sam started to say, but before the words were well out of his mouth the two lads were running helter-skelter along the hard white beach which circled the western side of the cove.

"Come back!" he called to them softly. "It isn't safe."

The boys heard the words but paid no heed, so Sam followed swiftly on in pursuit. He came up with them only after they had reached the very steps which had at some distant time formed an imposing entrance to a sacred temple.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"We're going inside!" replied Carl. "What do you think we came here for? I guess we've got to see the inside."

"Don't take any unnecessary risks!" advised Sam.

"What'd you bring us here for?" asked Carl.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Let's all go in together!"

Sam hesitated, but the boys seized him by the arms and almost forced him along. In a moment, however, he was as eager as the others.

"Do you mean to say," asked Jimmie, as they paused for a moment on a broad stone slab which lay before the portal of the ruined temple, "that you went inside on your former visit?"

"I certainly did!" was the reply.

"Then why are you backing up now?" asked Carl.

"On my previous visit," Sam explained, standing with his back against the western wall of the entrance, "there were no such demonstrations as we have seen to-night. Now think that over, kiddies, and tell me what it means. It's mighty puzzling to me!"

"Oh, we've got the answer to that!" exclaimed Jimmie. "Did you come here in an aeroplane, or did you walk in?"

"We came in on an aeroplane, early in the morning," was the reply.

"That's the answer!" exclaimed Jimmie. "The people who are operating these ghost stunts did not know you were coming because they saw no lights

in the sky. Now we came down with a noise like an express train and a great big acetylene lamp burning full blast. Don't you see?"

"That's the idea!" Carl cried. "The actors and stage hands all disappeared as soon as you showed around the angle of the cliff."

"But why should they go through what you call their stunts at this time, and not on the occasion of my former visit?" asked Sam.

"I'll tell you," replied Jimmie wrinkling his freckled nose, "there's some one who is interested in the case which called us to Peru doing those stunts."

"In that case," Sam declared, "they have a definite reason for keeping us out of this particular ruin!"

"That's the idea!" exclaimed Jimmie. "So far as we know, this man Redfern or some of his associates may be masquerading as ghosts."

"I came to this temple to-night," explained Sam, "thinking that perhaps this might be one of the way stations on the road to Lake Titicaca."

"You have guessed it!" exclaimed Jimmie. "The men who have been sent south to warn Redfern are doing their first stunts here!"

"And that," said Sam, "makes our position a dangerous one!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLOSING OF A DOOR.

"I WONDER if they expect to scare us out of the country by such demonstrations as that?" scoffed Carl.

"There is, doubtless, some reason for this demonstration," Sam observed, thoughtfully, "other than the general motive to put us in terror of haunted temples, but just now I can't see what it is."

"Redfern may be hiding in there!" suggested Jimmie, with a wink.

"Go on!" exclaimed Carl. "Didn't Mr. Havens say that Redfern was in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca? How could he be here, then?"

"Mr. Havens only said that Redfern was believed to be in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca," Sam corrected.

"Then they don't even know where he is!" exclaimed Carl.

"Of course they don't," laughed Sam. "If they did, they'd go there and get him. That's an easy one to answer!"

"Well, if Redfern isn't in that ruin," Jimmie declared, "then his own friends don't know where he is!"

"Yes, it seems to me," Sam agreed, "that the men who are trying to reach him are as much at sea as we are regarding his exact location."

"If they wasn't," Jimmie declared, "they wouldn't be staging such plays as that on general principles!"

"Well!" exclaimed Carl. "Here we stand talking as if we had positive information that the Redfern gang is putting on those stunts, while, as a matter of fact, we don't know whether they are or not!"

"And that's a fact, too!" said Jimmie. "The people in there may be ignorant of the fact that a man named Redfern ever existed."

"But the chances are that the Redfern bunch is doing the work all the same!" insisted Sam.

"The only way to find out is to go on in and see!" declared Carl.

"Well, come on, then!" exclaimed Jimmie.

The two boys darted in together, leaving Sam standing alone for an instant. He saw the illumination thrown on the interior walls by their searchlights and lost no time in following on after them.

The place was absolutely silent. There was not even the sound of bird's call or wing. The moonlight, filtering in through a break in what had once

been a granite roof, showed bare white walls with little heaps of debris in the corners.

"It seems to me," Sam said, as he looked around, "that the ghosts have chosen a very uncomfortable home."

"There must be other rooms," suggested Carl.

"There are two which still retain the appearance of apartments as originally constructed," replied Sam, "one to the right, and one to the left. There seems, also, to have been an extension at the rear, but that is merely a heap of hewn stones at this time."

As the young man ceased speaking the two boys darted through an opening in the west wall, swinging their flashlights about as they advanced into what seemed to be a stone-walled chamber of fair size. Following close behind, Sam saw the lads directing the rays of their electrics upon a series of bunks standing against the west wall. The sleeping places were well provided with pillows and blankets, and seemed to have been very recently occupied. Sam stepped closer and bent over one of the bunks.

"Now, what do you think about ghosts and ghost lights?" asked Jimmie.

"These ghosts," Carl cut in, "seem to have a very good idea as to what constitutes comfort."

"Three beds!" exclaimed Jimmie, flashing his light along the wall. "And that must mean three ghosts!"

Sam proceeded to a corner of the room as yet uninvestigated and was not much surprised when the round eye of his electric revealed a rough table, made of wooden planks, bearing dishes and remnants of food. He called at once to the boys and they gathered about him.

"Also," Carl chuckled, "the three ghosts do not live entirely upon spiritual food. See there," he continued, "they've had some kind of a stew, probably made out of game shot in the mountains."

"And they've been making baking powder biscuit, too!" Carl added.

"I don't suppose it would be safe to sample that stew?" Jimmie asked questioningly. "It looks good enough to eat!"

"Not for me!" declared Carl.

While the boys were examining the table and passing comment on the articles it held, Sam moved softly to the doorway by which they had entered and looked out into the corridor. Looking from the interior out to the moonlit lake beyond, the place lost somewhat of the dreary appearance it had shown when viewed under the searchlights. The walls were of white marble, as was the floor, and great slashes in the slabs showed that at one time they had been profusely ornamented with designs in metal, probably in gold and silver.

The moonlight, filtering through the broken roof, disclosed a depression in the floor in a back corner.

This, Sam reasoned, had undoubtedly held the waters of the fountain hundreds of years before. Directly across from the doorway in which he stood he saw another break in the wall.

On a previous visit this opening, which had once been a doorway, had been entirely unobstructed. Now a wall of granite blocks lay in the interior of the apartment, just inside the opening. It seemed to the young man from where he stood that there might still be means of entrance by passing between this newly-built wall and the inner surface of the chamber.

Thinking that he would investigate the matter more fully in the future, Sam turned back to where the boys were standing, still commenting on the prepared food lying on the table. As he turned back a low, heavy grumble agitated the air of the apartment.

The boys turned quickly, and the three stood not far from the opening in listening attitudes. The sound increased in volume as the moments passed. At first it seemed like the heavy vibrations of throat cords, either human or animal. Then it lifted into something like a shrill appeal, which resembled nothing so much as the scream of a woman in deadly peril. Involuntarily the boys stepped closer to the corridor.

"What do you make of it?" whispered Jimmie.

"Ghosts!" chuckled Carl.

"Some day," Jimmie suggested, in a graver tone than usual, "you'll be punished for your verbal treatment of ghosts! I don't believe there's anything on the face of the earth you won't make fun of. How do we know that spirits don't come back to earth?"

"They may, for all I know," replied Carl. "I'm not trying to decide the question, or to make light of it, either, but when I see the lot of cheap imitations like we've been put against to-night, I just have to express my opinion."

"They're cheap imitations, all right!" decided Jimmie.

"Cheap?" repeated Carl. "Flowing robes, and disappearing figures, and mysterious lights, and weird sounds! Why, a fellow couldn't work off such manifestations as we've seen to-night on the most superstitious residents of the lower West Side in the City of New York, and they'll stand for almost anything!"

"It strikes me," Sam, who had been listening to the conversation with an amused smile, declared, "that the sounds we are listening to now may hardly be classified as wailing!"

"Now, listen," Carl suggested, "and we'll see if we can analyze it."

At that moment the sound ceased.

The place seemed more silent than before because of the sudden cessation.

"It doesn't want to be analyzed!" chuckled Carl.

"Come on," Jimmie urged, "let's go and see what made it!"

"I think you'll have to find out where it came from first!" said Carl.

"It came from the opening across the second apartment," explained Sam. "I had little difficulty in locating it."

"That doesn't look to me like much of an opening," argued Carl.

"The stones you see," explained Sam, "are not laid in the entrance from side to side. They are built up back of the entrance, and my idea is that there must be a passage-way between them and the interior walls of the room. That wall, by the way, has been constructed since my previous visit. So you see," he added, turning to Carl, "the ghosts in this neck of the woods build walls as well as make baking powder biscuits."

"Well, that's a funny place to build a wall!" Carl asserted.

"Perhaps the builders don't like the idea of their red and blue lights and ghostly apparatus being exposed to the gaze of the vulgar public," suggested Jimmie. "That room is probably the apartment behind the scenes where the thunder comes from, and where some poor fellow of a supe is set to holding up the moon!"

"Well, why don't we go and find out about it?" urged Carl.

"Wait until I take a look on the outside," Sam requested. "The man in the long white robe may be rising out of the lake by this time. I don't know," he continued, "but that we have done a foolish thing in remaining here as we have, leaving the aeroplane unguarded."

"Perhaps I'd better run around the cliff and see if it's all right!" suggested Carl. "I'll be back in a minute."

"No," Sam argued, "you two remain here at the main entrance and I'll go and see about the machine. Perhaps," he warned, "you'd better remain right here, and not attempt to investigate that closed apartment until I return. I shan't be gone very long."

"Oh, of course," replied Jimmie, "we'll be good little boys and stand right here and wait for you to come back—not!"

Carl chuckled as the two watched the young man disappear around the angle of the cliff.

"Before he gets back," the boy said, "we'll know all about that room, won't we? Say," he went on in a moment, "I think this haunted temple business is about the biggest fraud that was ever staged. If people only knew enough to spot an impostor when they saw one, there wouldn't be prisons enough in the world to hold the rascals."

"You tell that to Sam to-night," laughed Jimmie. "He likes these moralizing stunts. Are you going in right now?"

By way of reply Carl stepped into the arch between the two walls and turned to the right into a passage barely more than a foot in width. Jimmie followed his example, but turned to the left. There the way was blocked by a granite boulder which reached from the floor to the roof itself.

"Nothing doing here!" he called back to Carl.

"I've found the way!" the latter answered. "Come along in! We'll be behind the scenes in about a minute."

The passage was not more than a couple of yards in length and gave on an open chamber which seemed, under the light of the electrics, to be somewhat larger than the one where the conveniences of living had been found. The faint illumination produced by the flashlights, of course revealed only a small portion of it at a time."

While the boys stood at the end of the narrow passage, studying the interior as best they might under the circumstances, a sound which came like the fall of a heavy footstep in the corridor outside reached their ears.

"There's Sam!" Carl exclaimed. "We'll leave him at the entrance and go in. There's a strange smell here, eh?"

"Smells like a wild animal show!" declared Jimmie.

Other footsteps were now heard in the corridor, and Jimmie turned back to speak with Sam. Carl caught him by the shoulders.

"That's Sam all right enough!" the latter exclaimed. "Don't go away right now, anyhow.

"What's doing?" asked Jimmie.

"There's a light back there!" was the reply, "and some one is moving around. Can't you hear the footsteps on the hard stone floor?"

"Mighty soft footsteps!" suggested Jimmie.

"Well, I'm going to know exactly what they are!" declared Carl.

"Well, why don't you go on, then?" demanded Jimmie.

The two boys stepped forward, walking in the shaft of light proceeding from their electrics. Once entirely clear of the passage, they kept straight ahead along the wall and turned the lights toward the center of the apartment, which seemed darker and drearier than the one recently visited.

Besides the smell of mold and a confined atmosphere there was an odor which dimly brought back to the minds of the boys previous visits to the homes of captive animals at the Central Park zoo."

"Here!" cried Jimmie directly, "there's a door just closed behind us!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INDIANS HELP SOME!

When Sam Weller turned the corner of the cliff and looked out at the spot where the *Ann* had been left, his first impression was that the machine had been removed from the valley.

He stood for a moment in uncertainty and then, regretting sincerely that he had remained so long away, cautiously moved along, keeping as close as possible to the wall of the cliff. In a moment he saw the planes of the *Ann* glistening in the moonlight at least a hundred yards from the place where she had been left.

Realizing the presence of hostile interests, he walked on toward the planes, hoping to be able to get within striking distance before being discovered. There was no one in sight in the immediate vicinity of the *Ann,* and yet she was certainly moving slowly over the ground.

The inference the young man drew from this was that persons unfamiliar with flying machines had, invaded the valley during his absence. Not being

able to get the machine into the air, they were, apparently, so far as he could see, rolling it away on its rubber-tired wheels. The progress was not rapid, but was directed toward a thicket which lay at the west end of the valley.

"That means," the young man mused, "that they're trying to steal the machine! It is evident," he went on, "that they are apprehensive of discovery, for they manage to keep themselves out of sight."

Realizing that it would be impossible for him to pass through the open moonlight without being observed by those responible for the erratic motions of the *Ann,* the young man remained standing perfectly still in a deep shadow against the face of the cliff.

The *Ann* moved on toward the thicket, and presently reached the shelter of trees growing there. In a moment she was entirely hidden from view.

"Now," thought Sam, "the people who have been kind enough to change the position of the machine will doubtless show themselves in the moonlight.

In this supposition he was not mistaken, for in a moment two men dressed in European garments emerged from the shadows of the grove and took their way across the valley, walking through the moonlight boldly and with no pretense of concealment.

Sam scrutinized the fellows carefully, but could not remember that he had ever seen either of them before. They were dusky, supple chaps, evidently of Spanish descent. As they walked they talked together in English, and occasionally pointed to the angle of the cliff around which the young man had recently passed.

A chattering of excited voices at the edge of the grove now called Sam's attention in that direction, and he saw at least half a dozen figures, apparently those of native Indians, squatting on the ground at the very edge of the thicket.

"And now," mused Sam, as the men stopped not far away and entered into what seemed to him to be an excited argument, "I'd like to know how these people learned of the revival of the hunt for Redfern! It isn't so very many days since Havens' expedition was planned in New York, and this valley is a good many hundred miles away from that merry old town."

Entirely at a loss to account for the manner in which information of this new phase of the search had reached a point in the wilds of Peru almost as soon as the record-breakng aeroplane could have carried the news, the young man gave up the problem for the time being and devoted his entire attention to the two men in European dress.

"I tell you they are in the temple," one of the men said speaking in a corrupt dialect of the Eng-

lish language which it is useless to attempt to reproduce. "They are in the Temple at this minute!"

"Don't be too sure of that, Felix!" the other said.

"And what is more," the man who had been called Felix went on, "they will never leave the temple alive!"

"And so fails the great expedition!" chuckled the second speaker.

"When we are certain that what must be has actually taken place," Felix went on, "I'll hide the flying machine in a safer place, pay you as agreed, and make my way back to Quito. Does that satisfy you?"

"I shall be satisfied when I have the feeling of the gold of the Gringoes!" was the reply.

Sam caught his breath sharply as he listened to the conversation.

"There was some trap in the temple, then," he mused, "designed to get us out of the way. I should have known that," he went on, bitterly, "and should never have left the boys alone there!"

The two men advanced nearer to the angle of the cliff and seemed to be waiting the approach of some one from the other side.

"And Miguel?" asked Felix. "Why is he not here?"

"Can you trust him?" he added, in a moment.

"With my own life!"

"The Gringoes are clever!" warned Felix.

"But see!" exclaimed the other. "The grated door! The hosts ready to welcome! There surely can be no mistake."

The men lapsed into silence and stood listening. Sam began to hope that their plans had indeed gone wrong.

For a moment he was uncertain as to what he ought to do. He believed that in the absence of the two leaders he might be able to get the *Ann* into the air and so bring assistance to the boys. And yet, he could not put aside the impression that immediate assistance was the only sort which could ever be of any benefit to the two lads!

"If they are in some trap in the temple," he soliloquized, "the thing to do is to get to them as soon as possible, even if we do lose the machine, which, after all, is not certain."

"The flying machine," the man who had been called Felix was now heard to say, "is of great value. It would bring a fortune in London."

"But how are you to get it out of this district just at this time?" asked the other. "How to get it out without discovery?"

"Fly it out!"

"Can you fly it out?" asked the other in a sarcastic tone.

"There are plenty who can!" replied Felix,

somewhat angrily. "But it is not to be taken out at present," he went on. "To lift it in the air now would be to notify every Gringoe from Quito to Lima that the prize machine of the New York Millionaire, having been stolen, is in this part of the country."

"That is very true," replied the other.

"Hence, I have hidden it," Felix went on.

"And the savages? Are they safe?" was the next question.

"As safe as such people usually are!" was the answer.

As Sam Weller listened, his mind was busily considering one expedient after another, plan after plan, which presented the least particle of hope for the release of the boys. From the conversation he had overheard he understood that the machine would not be removed for a number of days—until, in fact, the hue and cry over its loss had died out.

This, at least, lightened the difficulties to some extent. He could devote his entire attention to the situation at the temple without thought of the valuable aeroplane, but how to get to the temple with those two ruffians in the way! Only for the savage associates in the background, it is probable that he would have opened fire on the two schemers.

They were deliberately planning murder. That was a sufficient reason, to his mind, to bring about

decisive action on his part. However, the savages were there, just at the edge of the forest, and an attack on the two leaders would undoubtedly bring them into action. Of course it was not advisable for him to undertake a contest involving life and death with such odds against him.

The two men were still standing at the angle of the cliff.

Only for the brilliant moonlight, Sam believed that he might elude their vigilance and so make his way to the temple. But there was not a cloud in the sky, and the illumination seemed to grow stronger every moment as the moon passed over to the west.

At last the very thing the young man had hoped for in vain took place. A jumble of excited voices came from the thicket, and the men who were watching turned instantly in that direction. As they looked, the sound of blows and cries of pain came from the jungle.

"Those brutes will be eating each other alive next!" exclaimed Felix.

"That is so!" answered the other. "I warned you!"

"Suppose you go back and see what's wrong?" suggested Felix.

"I have no influence over the savages," was the reply, "and besides, the temple must be watched."

With an exclamation of anger Felix started away

in the direction of the forest. It was evident that he had his work cut out for him there, for the savages were fighting desperately, and his approach did not appear to terminate the engagement.

The man left at the angle of the cliff to watch and wait for news from the temple moved farther around the bend and stood leaning against the cliff, listening. Sam moved softly up behind him. The rattling of a pebble betrayed the young man's presence, and his hands upon the throat of the other alone prevented an outcry which would have brought Felix, and perhaps several of the savages, to the scene.

It was a desperate, wordless, almost noiseless, struggle that ensued. The young man's muscles, thanks to months of mountain exercise and freedom from stimulants and narcotics, were hard as iron, while those of his opponent seemed flabby and out of condition, doubtless because of too soft living in the immediate past.

The contest, therefore, was not of long duration. Realizing that he was about to lapse into unconsciousness, Sam's opponent threw out his hands in token of surrender. The young man deftly searched the fellow's person for weapons and then drew him to his feet.

"Now," he said, presenting his automatic to the fellow's breast, "if you utter a word or signal calculated to bring you help, that help will come too

late, even if it is only one instant away. At the first sound or indication of resistance, I'll put half a clip of bullets through your heart!"

"You have the victory!" exclaimed the other sullenly.

"Move along toward the temple!" demanded Sam.

"It is not for me to go there!" was the reply.

"And I'll walk along behind you," Sam went on, "and see that you have a ballast of bullets if any treachery is attempted."

"It is forbidden me to go to the temple to-night," the other answered, "but, under the circumstances, I go!"

Fearful that Felix might return at any moment, or that the savages, enraged beyond control, might break away in the direction of the temple, Sam pushed the fellow along as rapidly as possible, and the two soon came to the great entrance of that which, centuries before, had been a sacred edifice. The fellow shuddered as he stepped into the musty interior.

"It is not for me to enter!" he said.

"And now," Sam began, motioning his captive toward the chamber where the bunks and provisions had been discovered, "tell me about this trap which was set to-night for my chums."

"I know nothing!" was the answer.

"That is false," replied Sam. "I overheard the

conversation you had with Felix before the outbreak of the savages."

"I know nothing!" insisted the other.

"Now, let me tell you this," Sam said, flashing his automatic back and forth under the shaft of light which now fell almost directly upon the two, "my friends may be in deadly peril at this time. It may be that one instant's hesitation on your part will bring them to death."

The fellow shrugged his shoulders impudently and threw out his hands. Sam saw that he was watching the great entrance carefully, and became suspicious that some indication of the approach of Felix had been observed.

"I have no time to waste in arguments," Sam went on excitedly. "The trap you have set for my friends may be taking their lives at this moment. I will give you thirty seconds in which to reveal to me their whereabouts, and to inform me as to the correct course to take in order to protect them."

The fellow started back and fixed his eyes again on the entrance, and Sam, following his example, saw something which sent the blood rushing to his heart.

Outlined on the white stone was the shadow of a human being!

Although not in sight, either an enemy or a friend was at hand!

CHAPTER XV.

A QUESTION OF MARKSMANSHIP.

"DOOR?" repeated Carl, in reply to his chum's exclamation. "There's no door here!"

"But there is!" insisted Jimmie. "I heard the rattle of iron against granite only a moment ago!"

As the boy spoke he turned his flashlight back to the narrow passage and then, catching his chum by the arm, pointed with a hand which was not altogether steady to an iron grating which had swung or dropped from some point unknown into a position which effectually barred their return to the outer air! The bars of the gate, for it was little else, were not brown and rusty but bright and apparently new.

"That's a new feature of the establishment," Jimmie asserted. "That gate hasn't been long exposed to this damp air!"

"I don't care how long it hasn't been here!" Carl said, rather crossly. "What I want to know is how long is it going to remain there?"

"I hope it will let us out before dinner time," suggested Jimmie.

"Away, you and your appetite!" exclaimed Carl. "I suppose you think this is some sort of a joke. You make me tired!"

"And the fact that we couldn't get out if we wanted to," Jimmie grinned, "makes me hungry!"

"Cut it out!" cried Carl. "The thing for us to do now is to find some way of getting by that man-made obstruction."

"Man-made is all right!" agreed Jimmie. "It is perfectly clear, now, isn't it, that the supernatural had nothing to do with the demonstrations we have seen here!"

"I thought you understood that before!" cried Carl, impatiently.

Jimmie, who stood nearest to the gate, now laid a hand upon one of the upright bars and brought his whole strength to bear. The obstruction rattled slightly but remained firm.

"Can't move it!" the boy said. "We may have to tear the wall down!"

"And the man who swung the gate into position?" questioned Carl. "What do you think he'll be doing while we're pulling down that heap of stones? You've got to think of something better than that, my son!"

"Anyway," Jimmie said, hopefully, "Sam is on the outside, and he'll soon find out that we've been caught in a trap."

"I don't want to pose as a prophet of evil, or

anything like that," Carl went on, "but it's just possible that he may have been caught in a trap, too. Anyway, it's up to us to go ahead and get out, if we can, without any reference to assistance from the outside."

"Go ahead, then!" Jimmie exclaimed. "I'm in with anything you propose!"

The boys now exerted their united strength on the bars of the gate, but all to no purpose. So far as they could determine, the iron contrivance had been dropped down from above into grooves in the stone-work on either side. The bars were an inch or more in thickness, and firmly enclosed in parallel beams of small size which crossed them at regular intervals.

Seeing the condition of affairs, Jimmie suggested:

"Perhaps we can push it up!"

"Anything is worth trying!" replied Carl.

But the gate was too firmly in place to be moved, even a fraction of an inch, by their joint efforts.

"Now, see here," Jimmie said, after a short and almost painful silence, "there's no knowing how long we may be held in this confounded old dungeon. We'll need light as long as we're here, so I suggest that we use only one flashlight at a time."

"That will help some!" answered Carl, extinguishing his electric.

Jimmie threw his light along the walls of the

chamber and over the floor. There appeared to be no break of any kind in the white marble which shut in the apartment, except at one point in a distant corner, where a slab had been removed.

"Perhaps," suggested Carl, "the hole in the corner is exactly the thing we're looking for."

"It strikes me," said Jimmie, "that one of us saw a light in that corner not long ago. I don't remember whether you called my attention to it, or whether I saw it first, but I remember that we talked about a light in the apartment as we looked in."

"Perhaps we'd better watch the hole a few minutes before moving over to it," suggested Carl. "The place it leads to may hold a group of savages, or a couple of renegades, sent on here to make trouble for casual visitors."

"Casual visitors!" repeated Jimmie. "That doesn't go with me! You know, and I know, that this stage was set for our personal benefit! How the Redfern bunch got the men in here so quickly, or how they got the information into this topsy-turvy old country, is another question."

"I presume you are right," Carl agreed. "In some particulars," the boy went on, "this seems to me to be a situation somewhat similar to our experiences in the California mountains."

"Right you are!" cried Jimmie.

The circle of light from the electric illuminated

the corner where the break in the wall had been observed only faintly. Determined to discover everything possible regarding what might be an exit from the apartment, Jimmie kept his light fixed steadily on that corner.

In a couple of minutes Carl caught the boy by the arm and pointed along the finger of light.

"Hold it steadier now," he said. "I saw a movement there just now."

"What kind of a movement?" asked the other.

"Looked like a ball of fire."

"It may be the cat!" suggested Jimmie.

"Quit your foolishness!" advised Carl impatiently. "This is a serious situation, and there's no time for any grandstanding!"

"A ball of fire!" repeated Jimmie scornfully. "What would a ball of fire be doing there?"

"What would a blue ball of fire be doing on the roof?" asked Carl, reprovingly. "Yet we saw one there, didn't we?"

Although Jimmie was inclined to treat the situation as lightly as possible, he knew very well that the peril was considerable. Like a good many other boys in a trying situation, he was usually inclined to keep his unpleasant mental processes to himself. He now engaged in what seemed to Carl to be trivial conversation, yet the desperate situation was no less firmly impressed upon his mind.

The boys waited for some moments before speak-

ing again, listening and watching for the reappearance of the object which had attracted their attention.

"There!" Carl cried in a moment. "Move your light a little to the left. I'm sure I saw a flash of color pass the opening."

"I saw that too!" Jimmie agreed. "Now what do you think it can be?"

In a moment there was no longer doubt regarding the presence at the opening which was being watched so closely. The deep vocal vibrations which had been noticed from the other chamber seemed to shake the very wall against which the boy stood. As before, it was followed in a moment by the piercing, lifting cry which on the first occasion had suggested the appeal of a woman in agony or terror.

The boys stood motionless, grasping each other by the hand, and so each seeking the sympathy and support of the other, until the weird sound died out.

"And that," said Jimmie in a moment, "is no ghost!"

"Ghost?" repeated Carl scornfully. "You may as well talk about a ghost making that gate and setting it against us!"

"Anyway," Jimmie replied, "the wail left an odor of sulphur in the air!"

"Yes," answered Carl, "and the sulphur you speak of is a sulphur which comes from the dens of

wild beasts! Now do you know what we're up against?"

"Mountain lions!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Jaguars!" answered Carl.

"I hope they're locked in!" suggested Jimmie.

"Can you see anything that looks like a grate before that opening?" asked Carl. "I'm sure I can't."

"Nothing doing in that direction!" was the reply.

At regular intervals, now, a great, lithe, crouching body could be seen moving back and forth at the opening, and now and then a cat-like head was pushed into the room! At such times the eyes of the animal, whatever it was, shone like balls of red fire in the reflection of the electric light. Although naturally resourceful and courageous, the two boys actually abandoned hope of ever getting out of the place alive!

"I wonder how many wild animals there are in there?" asked Carl in a moment. "It seems to me that I have seen two separate figures."

"There may be a dozen for all we know," Jimmie returned. "Gee!" he exclaimed, reverting to his habit of concealing serious thoughts by lightly spoken words, "Daniel in the lion's den had nothing on us!"

"How many shots have you in your automatic?"

asked Carl, drawing his own from his pocket. "We'll have to do some shooting, probably."

"Why, I have a full clip of cartridges," Jimmie answered.

"But have you?" insisted Carl.

"Why, surely, I have!" returned Jimmie. "Don't you remember we filled our guns night before last and never——"

"I thought so!" exclaimed Carl, ruefully. "We put in fresh clips night before last, and exploded eight or nine cartridges apiece on the return trip to Quito. Now, how many bullets do you think you have available? One or two?"

"I don't know!" replied Jimmie, and there was almost a sob in his voice as he spoke. "I presume I have only one."

"Perhaps the electric light may keep the brutes away," said Carl hopefully. "You know wild animals are afraid of fire."

"Yes, it may," replied Jimmie, "but it strikes me that our little torches will soon become insufficient protectors. Those are jaguars out there, I suppose you know. And they creep up to campfires and steal savage children almost out of their mothers' arms!"

"Where do you suppose Sam is by this time?" asked Carl, in a moment, as the cat-like head appeared for the fourth or fifth time at the opening.

"I'm afraid Sam couldn't get in here in time

to do us any good even if he stood in the corridor outside!" was the reply. "Whatever is done, we've got to do ourselves."

"And that brings us down to a case of shooting!" Carl declared.

"It's only a question of time," Jimmie went on, "when the jaguars will become hungry enough to attack us. When they get into the opening, full under the light of the electric, we'll shoot."

"I'll hold the light," Carl argued, "and you do the shooting. You're a better marksman than I am, you know! When your last cartridge is gone, I'll hand you my gun and you can empty that. If there's only two animals and you are lucky with your aim, we may escape with our lives so far as this one danger is concerned. How we are to make our escape after that is another matter."

"If there are more than two jaguars," Jimmie answered, "or if I'm unlucky enough to injure one without inflicting a fatal wound, it will be good-bye to the good old flying machines."

"That's about the size of it!" Carl agreed.

All this conversation had occurred, of course, at intervals, whenever the boys found the heart to put their hopes and plans into words. It seemed to them that they had already spent hours in the desperate situation in which they found themselves. The periods of silence, however, had been briefer than they thought, and the time between the de-

parture of Sam and that moment was not much more than half an hour.

"There are two heads now!" Jimmie said, after a time, "and they're coming out! Hold your light steady when they reach the center of the room. I can't afford to miss my aim."

"Is your arm steady?" almost whispered Carl.

"Never better!" answered Jimmie.

Four powerful, hungry, jaguars, instead of two, crept out of the opening! Jimmie tried to cheer his companion with the whispered hope that there might possibly be bullets enough for them all, and raised his weapon. Two shots came in quick succession, and two jaguars crumpled down on the floor. Nothing daunted, the other brutes came on, and Jimmie seized Carl's automatic. The only question now was this:

How many bullets did the gun hold?

CHAPTER XVI.

BESIEGED IN THE TEMPLE.

As Sam watched the shadow cast by the moonlight on the marble slab at the entrance, his prisoner turned sharply about and lifted a hand as if to shield himself from attack.

"A savage!" he exclaimed in a terrified whisper.

It seemed to Sam Weller at that moment that no word had ever sounded more musically in his ears. The expression told him that a third element had entered into the situation. He believed from recent experiences that the savages who had been seen at the edge of the forest were not exactly friendly to the two white men. Whether or not they would come to his assistance was an open question, but at least there was a chance of their creating a diversion in his favor.

"How do you know the shadow is that of a savage?" asked Sam.

The prisoner pointed to the wide doorway and crowded back behind his captor. There, plainly

revealed in the moonlight, were the figures of two brawny native Indians! Felix was approaching the entrance with a confident step, and the two watchers saw him stop for an instant and address a few words to one of the Indians. The next moment the smile on the fellow's face shifted to a set expression of terror.

Before he could utter another word, he received a blow on the head which stretched him senseless on the smooth marble. Then a succession of threatening cries came from the angle of the cliff, and half a dozen Indians swarmed up to where the unconscious man lay!

The prisoner now crouched behind his captor, his body trembling with fear, his lips uttering almost incoherent appeals for protection.

The savages glanced curiously into the temple for a moment and drew their spears and bludgeons. Sam turned his eyes away with a shudder. He heard blows and low hisses of enmity, but there came no outcry.

When he looked again the moonlight showed a dark splotch on the white marble, and that alone! The Indians and their victim had disappeared.

"Mother of Mercy!" shouted the prisoner in a faltering tone,

"Where did they take him?" asked Sam.

The prisoner shuddered and made no reply. The mute answer, however, was sufficient. The young

man understood that Felix had been murdered by the savages within sound of his voice.

"Why?" he asked the trembling prisoner.

"Because," was the hesitating answer, "they believe that only evil spirits come out of the sky in the night-time."

Sam remembered of his own arrival and that of his friends, and congratulated himself and them that the savages had not been present to witness the event.

"And they think he came in the machine?" asked Sam.

The prisoner shuddered and covered his face with his hands.

"And now," demanded Sam, "in order to save your own life, will you tell me what I want to know?"

The old sullen look returned to the eyes of the captive. Perhaps he was thinking of the great reward he might yet receive from his distant employers if he could escape and satisfy them that the boys had perished in the trap set for them. At any rate he refused to answer at that time. In fact his hesitation was a brief one, for while Sam waited, a finger upon the trigger of his automatic, two shots came from the direction of the chamber across the corridor, and the acrid smell of gunpowder came to his nostrils.

The prisoner gasped and opened his lips. It was

undoubtedly his belief at that time that all his hopes of making a favorable report to his employers had vanished. The shots, he understood, indicated resistance; perhaps successful resistance.

"Yes," he said hurriedly, his knees almost giving way under the weight of his shaking body. "Yes, I'll tell you where your friends are."

He hesitated and pointed toward the opposite entrance.

"In there!" he cried. "Felix caused them to be thrown to the beasts!"

The young man seized the prisoner fiercely by the throat.

"Show me the way!" he demanded.

The captive still pointed to the masked entrance across the corridor and Sam drew him along, almost by main force. When they came to the narrow passage at the eastern end of which the barred gate stood, they saw a finger of light directed into the interior of the apartment.

While they looked, Sam scarcely knowing what course to pursue, two more shots sounded from within, and the odor of burned powder became almost unbearable. Sam threw himself against the iron gate and shouted out:

"Jimmie! Carl!"

"Here!" cried a voice out of the smoke. "Come to the gate with your gun. I missed the last shot, and Carl is down!"

Still pushing the prisoner ahead of him, Sam crowded through the narrow passage and stood looking over the fellow's shoulder into the smoke-scented room beyond. His electric light showed Jimmie standing with his back against the gate, his feet pushed out to protect the figure of Carl, lying on the floor against the bars. The searchlight in the boy's hand was waving rythmetically in the direction of a pair of gleaming eyes which looked out of the darkness.

"My gun is empty!" Jimmie almost whispered. "I'll hold the light straight in his eyes, and you shoot through the bars."

Sam forced the captive down on the corridor, where he would be out of the way and still secure from escape, and fired two shots at the blood-mad eyes inside. The great beast fell to the floor instantly and lay still for a small fraction of a second then leaped to his feet again.

With jaws wide open and fangs showing threateningly, he sprang toward Jimmie, but another shot from Sam's automatic finished the work the others had begun. Jimmie sank to the floor like one bereft of strength.

"Get us out!" he said in a weak voice. "Open the door and get us out! One of the jaguars caught hold of Carl, and I thought I heard the crunching of bones. The boy may be dead for all I know."

Sam applied his great strength to the barred

gate, but it only shook mockingly under his straining hands. Then he turned his face downward to where his prisoner lay cowering upon the floor.

"Can you open this gate?" he asked.

Once more the fellow's face became stubborn.

"Felix had the key!" he exclaimed.

"All right!" cried Sam. "We'll send you out to Felix to get it!"

He seized the captive by the collar as he spoke and dragged him, not too gently, through the narrow passage and out into the main corridor. Once there he continued to force him toward the entrance. The moon was now low in the west and shadows here and there specked the little plaza in front of the temple. In addition to the moonlight there was a tint of gray in the sky which told of approaching day.

The prisoner faced the weird scene with an expression of absolute terror. He almost fought his way back into the temple.

"Your choice!" exclaimed Sam. "The key to the gate or you return to the savages!"

The fellow dropped to his knees and clung to his captor.

"I have the key to the gate!" he declared. "But I am not permitted to surrender it. You must take it from me."

"You're loyal to some one, anyhow!" exclaimed Sam, beginning a search of the fellow's pockets.

At last the key was found, and Sam hurried away with it. He knew then that there would be no further necessity for guarding the prisoner at that time. The fact that the hostile savages were abroad and that he was without weapons would preclude any attempt at escape.

At first the young man found it difficult to locate the lock to which the key belonged. At last he found it, however, and in a moment Jimmie crept out of the chamber, trying his best to carry Carl in his arms.

"Here!" cried Sam. "Let me take the boy. Are you hurt yourself?" he added as Jimmie leaned against the wall.

"I think," Jimmie answered, "one of the brutes gave me a nip in the leg, but I can walk all right."

Sam carried Carl to the center of the corridor and laid him down on the marble floor. A quick examination showed rather a bad wound on the left shoulder from which considerable blood must have escaped.

"He'll be all right as soon as he regains his strength!" the young man cried. "And now, Jimmie," he went on, "let's see about your wound."

"It's only a scratch," the boy replied, "but it bled like fury, and I think that's what makes me so weak. Did we get all the jaguars?" he added, with a wan smile. "I don't seem to remember much about the last two or three minutes."

"Every last one of them!" answered Sam cheerfully.

While Sam was binding Carl's wound the boy opened his eyes and looked about the apartment whimsically.

"We seem to be alive yet," he said, rolling his eyes so as to include Jimmie in his line of vision. "I guess Jimmie was right when he said that Daniel in the lions' den was nothing to this."

"But when they took Daniel out of the lions' den," cut in Jimmie, "they brought him to a place where there was something doing in the way of sustenance! What about that?"

"Cut it out!" replied Carl feebly.

"But, honestly," Jimmie exclaimed, "I never was so hungry in my life!"

The captive looked at the two boys with amazement mixed with admiration in his eyes.

"And they're just out of the jaws of death!" he exclaimed.

"Is that the greaser that put us into the den of lions?" asked Carl, pointing to the prisoner.

"No, no!" shouted the trembling man. "I am only the animal keeper! Felix laid the plans for your murder."

"The keeper of what?" asked Sam.

"Of the wild animals!" was the reply. "I catch them here for the American shows. And now they are killed!" he complained.

"So that contraption, the masked entrance, the iron gate, and all that, was arranged to hold wild animals in captivity until they could be transferred to the coast?" asked Sam.

"Exactly!" answered the prisoner. "The natives helped me catch the jaguars and I kept them for a large payment. Then, yesterday, a runner told me that a strange white man sought my presence in the forest at the top of the valley. It was Felix. I met him there, and he arranged with me for the use of the wild-animal cage for only one night."

"And you knew the use to which he intended to put it?" asked Sam angrily. "You knew that he meant murder?"

"I did not!" was the reply. "He told Miguel what to do if any of you entered and did not tell me. I was not to enter the temple to-night!"

"And where's Miguel?" demanded the young man.

The captive pointed to the broken roof of the temple.

"Miguel remained here," he said, "to let down the gate to the passage and lift the grate which kept the jaguars in their den."

"Do you think he's up there now?" asked Jimmie. "I'd like to see this person called Miguel. I have a few words to say to him."

"No, indeed!" answered the prisoner. "Miguel

is a coward. He probably took to his heels when the shots were fired."

The prisoner, who gave his name as Pedro, insisted that he knew nothing whatever of the purpose of the man who secured his assistance in the desperate game which had just been played. He declared that Felix seemed to understand perfectly that Gringoes would soon arrive in flying machines. He said that the machines were to be wrecked, and the occupants turned loose in the mountains.

It was Pedro's idea that two, and perhaps three, flying machines were expected. He said that Felix had no definite idea as to when they would arrive. He only knew that he had been stationed there to do what he could to intercept the progress of those on the machines. He said that the machines had been seen from a distance, and that Felix and himself had watched the descent into the valley from a secure position in the forest. They had remained in the forest until the Gringoes had left for the temple, and had then set about examining the machine.

While examining the machine the savages had approached and had naturally received the impression that Felix was the Gringo who had descended in the aeroplane. He knew some of the Indians, he said.

The Indians, he said, were very superstitious, and believed that flying machines brought death and

disaster to any country they visited. By making them trifling presents he, himself, had succeeded in keeping on good terms with them until the machine had descended and been hidden in the forest.

"But," the prisoner added with a significant shrug of his shoulders, "when we walked in the direction of the temple the Indians suspected that Felix had come to visit the evil spirits they believed to dwell there and so got beyond control. They would kill me now as they killed him!"

"Do the Indians never attack the temple?" asked Sam.

"Perhaps," Pedro observed, with a sly smile, "you saw the figure in flowing robes and the red and blue lights!"

"We certainly did!" answered Sam.

"While the animals are being collected and held in captivity here," Pedro continued, "it is necessary to do such things in order to keep the savages away. Miguel wears the flowing robes, and drops into the narrow entrance to an old passage when he finds it necessary to disappear. The Indians will never actually enter the temple, though they may besiege it."

"There goes your ghost story!" Carl interrupted. "Why," he added, "it's about the most commonplace thing I ever heard of! The haunted temple is just headquarters for the agents of an American menagerie!"

"And all this brings up the old questions," Jimmie said. "How did the Redfern bunch know that any one of our airships would show up here? How did they secure the presence of an agent so far in the interior in so short a time? I think I've asked these questions before!" he added, grinning.

"But I have no recollection of their ever having been answered," said Sam.

"Say," questioned Jimmie, with a wink at Carl, "how long is this seance going to last without food? I'd like to know if we're never going to have another breakfast."

"There's something to eat in the provision boxes of the *Ann,*" Sam replied hopefully.

"Yes," said Jimmie sorrowfully, "and there's a bunch of angry savages between us and the grub on board the *Ann!* If you look out the door, you'll see the brutes inviting us to come out and be cooked!"

The prisoner threw a startled glance outside and ran to the back of the temple, declaring that the savages were besieging the temple, and that it might be necessary for them to lock themselves in the chamber for days with the slain jaguars!

Jimmie rubbed his stomach and groaned!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOST TELEGRAMS.

On the morning following the departure of Sam and the boys, Mr. Havens was awakened by laughing voices in the corridor outside his door. His first impression was that Sam and Jimmie had returned from their midnight excursion in the *Ann.* He arose and, after dressing hastily, opened the door, thinking that the adventures of the night must have been very amusing indeed to leave such a hang-over of merriment for the morning.

When he saw Ben and Glenn standing in the hall he confessed to a feeling of disappointment, but invited the lads inside without showing it.

"You are out early," he said as the boys, still laughing, dropped into chairs. "What's the occasion of the comedy?"

"We've been out to the field," replied Ben, "and we're laughing to think how Carl bested Sam and Jimmie last night."

"What about it?" asked the millionaire.

"Why," Ben continued, "it seems that Sam and

Jimmie planned a moonlight ride in the *Ann* all by themselves. Carl got next to their scheme and bounced into the seat with Jimmie just as the machine swung into the air. I'll bet Jimmie was good and provoked about that!"

"What time did the *Ann* return?" asked Havens.

"Return?" repeated Ben. "She hasn't returned yet."

The millionaire turned from the mirror in which he was completing the details of his toilet and faced the boys with a startled look in his eyes. The boys ceased laughing and regarded him curiously.

"Are you sure the boys haven't returned?" Mr. Havens asked.

"Anyhow," Glenn replied, "the *Ann* hasn't come back!"

"Did they tell you where they were going?" asked Ben.

"They did not," was the reply. "Sam said that he thought he might be able to pick up valuable information and asked for the use of the *Ann* and the company of Jimmie. That's all he said to me concerning the moonlight ride he proposed."

In bringing his mind back to the conversation with Sam on the previous night, Mr. Havens could not avoid a feeling of anxiety as he considered the significant words of the young man and the information concerning the sealed letter to be opened

only in case of his death. He said nothing of this to the boys, however, but continued the conversation as if no apprehension dwelt in his mind regarding the safety of the lads.

"If they only went out for a short ride by moonlight," Glenn suggested, in a moment, "they ought to have returned before daylight."

"You can never tell what scrape that boy Jimmie will get into!" laughed Ben. "He's the hoodoo of the party and the mascot combined! He gets us into all kinds of scrapes, but he usually makes good by getting us out of the scrapes we get ourselves into."

"Oh, they'll be back directly," the millionaire remarked, although deep down in his consciousness was a growing belief that something serious had happened to the lads.

He, however, did his best to conceal the anxiety he felt from Ben and his companion.

Directly the three went down to breakfast together, and while the meal was in progress a report came from the field where the machines had been left that numerous telegrams addressed to Mr. Havens had been delivered there. The millionaire looked puzzled at the information.

"I left positive orders at the telegraph office," he said, "to have all my messages delivered here. Did one of the men out there receipt for them? If so, perhaps one of you boys would better chase out

and bring them in," he added turning to his companions at the table.

The messenger replied that the messages had been receipted for, and that he had offered to bring them in, but that the man in charge had refused to turn them over to him. He seemed annoyed at the fact.

"All right," Mr. Havens replied, "Ben will go out to the field with you and bring the messages in. And," he added, as the messenger turned away, "kindly notify me the instant the *Ann* arrives."

The messenger bowed and started away, accompanied by Ben.

"I don't understand about the telegrams having been sent to the field," Mr. Havens went on, as the two left the breakfast table and sauntered into the lobby of the hotel. "I left positive instructions with Mr. Mellen to have all messages delivered here. I also left instructions with the clerk to send any messages to my room, no matter what time they came. The instructions were very explicit."

"Oh, you know how things get balled up in telegraph offices, and messenger offices, and post-offices!" grinned Glenn. "Probably Mr. Mellen left the office early in the evening, and the man in charge got lazy, or indifferent, or forgetful, and sent the messages to the wrong place."

While the two talked together, Mr. Mellen strolled into the hotel and approached the corner of the lobby where they sat.

"Good-morning!" he said taking a chair at their side. "Anything new concerning the southern trip?"

"Not a thing!" replied Mr. Havens. "Sam went out in the *Ann* for a short run last night, and we're only waiting for his return in order to continue our journey. We expect to be away by noon."

"I hope I shall hear from you often," the manager said.

"By the way," the millionaire remarked, "what about the telegrams which were sent out to the field last night?"

"No telegrams for you were sent out to the field last night!" was the reply. "The telegrams directed to you are now at the hotel desk, unless you have called for them."

"But a messenger from the field reports that several telegrams for me were received there. I don't understand this at all."

"They certainly did not come from our office!" was the reply.

The millionaire arose hastily and approached the desk just as the clerk was drawing a number of telegrams from his letter-box.

"I left orders to have these taken to your room as soon as they arrived," the clerk explained, "but it seems that the night man chucked them into your letter-box and forgot all about them."

Mr. Havens took the telegrams into his hand and

returned to the corner of the lobby where he had been seated with Mellen and Glenn.

"There seems to be a hoodoo in the air concerning my telegrams," he said with a smile, as he began opening the envelopes. "The messages which came last night were not delivered to my room, but were left lying in my letter-box until just now. In future, please instruct your messengers," he said to the manager, "to bring my telegrams directly to my room—that is," he added, "if I remain in town and any more telegrams are received for me."

"I'll see that you get them directly they are received," replied the manager, impatiently. "If the hotel clerk objects to the boy going to your room in the night-time, I'll tell him to draw a gun on him!" he added with a laugh. "Are the delayed telegrams important ones?"

"They are in code!" replied the millionaire. "I'm afraid I'll have to go to my room and get the code sheet."

Mr. Havens disappeared up the elevator, and Mellen and Glenn talked of aviation, and canoeing, and base-ball, and the dozen and one things in which men and boys are interested, for half an hour. Then the millionaire appeared in the lobby beckoning them toward the elevator.

Mr. Mellen observed that the millionaire was greatly excited as he motioned them into his suite of rooms and pointed to chairs. The telegrams

which he had received were lying open on a table near the window and the code sheet and code translations were not far away.

Before the millionaire could open the conversation Ben came bounding into the room without knocking. His face was flushed with running, and his breath came in short gasps. As he turned to close the door he shook a clenched fist threateningly in the direction of the elevator.

"That fool operator," he declared, "left me standing in the corridor below while he took one of the maids up to the 'steenth floor, and I ran all the way up the stairs! I'll get him good sometime!"

"Did you bring the telegrams?" asked the millionaire with a smile.

"Say, look here!" Ben exclaimed dropping into a chair beside the table. "I'd like to know what's coming off!"

Mr. Havens and his companions regarded the boy critically for a moment and then the millionaire asked:

"What's broke loose now?"

"Well," Ben went on, "I went out to the field and the man there said he'd get the telegrams in a minute. I stood around looking over the *Louise* and *Bertha*, and asking questions about what Sam said when he went away on the *Ann*, until I got tired of waiting, then I chased up to where this

fellow stood and he said he'd go right off and get the messages."

"Why didn't you hand him one?" laughed Glenn.

"I wanted to," Ben answered. "If I'd had him down in the old seventeenth ward in the little old city of New York, I'd have set the bunch on him. Well, after a while, he poked away to the little shelter-tent the men put up to sleep in last night and rustled around among the straw and blankets and came back and said he couldn't find the messages."

The millionaire and the manager exchanged significant glances.

"He told me," Ben went on, "that the telegrams had been receipted for and hidden under a blanket, to be delivered early in the morning. Said he guessed some one must have stolen them, or mislaid them, but didn't seem to think the matter very important."

The millionaire pointed to the open messages lying on the table.

"How many telegrams came for me last night?" he asked.

"Eight," was the reply.

"And there are eight here," the millionaire went on.

"And that means——"

"And that means," the millionaire said, interrupting the manager, "that the telegrams delivered on

the field last night were either duplicates of these cipher despatches or fake messages!"

"That's just what I was going to remark," said Mellen.

"Has the *Ann* returned?" asked Glenn of Ben.

"Not yet," was the reply.

"Suppose we take one of the other machines and go up and look for her?"

"We'll discuss that later on, boys," the millionaire interrupted.

"I would give a considerable to know," the manager observed, in a moment, "just who handled the messages which were left at the hotel counter last night. And I'm going to do my best to find out!" he added.

"That ought to be a perfectly simple matter," suggested Mr. Havens.

"In New York, yes! In Quito, no!" answered the manager. "A good many of the natives who are in clerical positions here are crooked enough to live in a corkscrew. They'll do almost anything for money."

"That's the idea I had already formed of the people," Ben cut in.

"Besides," the manager continued, "the chances are that the night clerk tumbled down on a sofa somewhere in the lobby and slept most of the night, leaving bell-boys and subordinates to run the hotel."

"In that event," Mr. Havens said, "the telegrams might have been handled by half a dozen different people."

"I'm afraid so!" replied the manager.

"But the code!" suggested Ben. "They couldn't read them!"

"But they might copy them for some one who could!" argued the manager. "And the copies might have been sent out to the field for the express purpose of having them stolen," he went on with an anxious look on his face. "Are they very important?" he asked of the millionaire.

"Very much so," was the answer. "In fact, they are code copies of private papers taken from deposit box A, showing the plans made in New York for the South American aeroplane journey."

"And showing stops and places to look through and all that?" asked Ben. "If that's the kind of information the telegrams contained, I guess the Redfern bunch in this vicinity are pretty well posted about this time!"

"I'm afraid so," the millionaire replied gloomily. "Well," he continued in a moment, "we may as well get ready for our journey. I remember now," he said casually, "that Sam said last night that we ought to proceed on our way without reference to him this morning. His idea then was that we would come up with him somewhere between Quito and Lake Titicaca. So we may as well be moving, and

leave the investigation of the fraudulent or copied telegrams to Mr. Mellen."

"Funny thing for them to go chasing off in that way!" declared Ben.

But no one guessed the future as the aeroplanes started southward!

CHAPTER XVIII.

JIMMIE'S AWFUL HUNGER

"You say," Sam asked, as Pedro crouched in the corner of the temple where the old fountain basin had been, "that the Indians will never actually attack the temple?"

"They never have," replied Pedro, his teeth chattering in terror. "Since I have been stationed here to feed and care for the wild animals in captivity, I have known them to utter threats, but until to-night, so far as I know, none of them ever placed a foot on the temple steps."

"They did it to-night, all right!" Jimmie declared.

"Felix could tell us about that if they had left enough of his frame to utter a sound!" Carl put in.

The boys were both weak from loss of blood, but their injuries were not of a character to render them incapable of moving about.

"What I'm afraid of," Pedro went on, "is that they'll surround the temple and try to starve us into submission."

"Jerusalem!" cried Jimmie. "That doesn't sound good to me. I'm so hungry now I could eat one of those jaguars raw!"

"But they are not fit to eat!" exclaimed Pedro.

"They wanted to eat us, didn't they?" demanded Jimmie. "I guess turn and turn about is fair play!"

"Is there no secret way out of this place?" asked Sam, as the howls of the savages became more imperative.

Pedro shook his head doubtfully. There were rumors, he said, of secret passages, but he had never been able to discover them. For his own part, he did not believe they existed.

"What sort of a hole is that den the jaguars came out of?" asked Jimmie. "It looks like it might extend a long way into the earth."

"No," answered Pedro, "it is only a subterranean room, used a thousand years ago by the priests who performed at the broken altar you see beyond the fountain. When the Gringoes came with their proposition to hold wild animals here until they could be taken out to Caxamarca, and thence down the railroad to the coast, they examined the walls of the chamber closely, but found no opening by which the wild beasts might escape. Therefore, I say, there is no passage leading from that chamber."

"From the looks of things," Carl said, glancing

out at the Indians, now swarming by the score on the level plateau between the front of the ruined temple and the lake, "we'll have plenty of time to investigate this old temple before we get out of it."

"How are we going to investigate anything when we're hungry?" demanded Jimmie. "I can't even think when I'm hungry."

"Take away Jimmie's appetite," grinned Carl, "and there wouldn't be enough left of him to fill an ounce bottle!"

Pedro still sat in the basin of the old fountain, rocking his body back and forth and wailing in a mixture of Spanish and English that he was the most unfortunate man who ever drew the breath of life.

"The animal industry," he wailed, "is ruined. No more will the hunters of wild beasts bring them to this place for safe keeping. No more will the Indians assist in their capture. No more will the gold of the Gringo kiss my palm. The ships came out of the sky and brought ruin. Right the Indians are when they declare that the men who fly bring only disease and disaster!" he continued, with an angry glance directed at the boys.

"Cheer up!" laughed Jimmie. "Cheer up, old top, and remember that the worst is yet to come! Say!" the boy added in a moment. "How would it do to step out to the entrance and shoot a couple of those noisy savages?"

"I never learned how to shoot with an empty gun!" Carl said scornfully.

"How many cartridges have you in your gun?" asked Jimmie of Sam.

"About six," was the reply. "I used two out of the clip on the jaguars and two were fired on the ride to Quito."

"And that's all the ammunition we've got, is it?" demanded Carl.

"That's all we've got here!" answered Sam. "There's plenty more at the machine if the Indians haven't taken possession of it."

"Little good that does us!" growled Jimmie.

"You couldn't eat 'em!" laughed Carl.

"But I'll tell you what I could do!" insisted Jimmie. "If we had plenty of ammunition, I could make a sneak outside and bring in game enough to keep us eating for a month."

"You know what always happens to you when you go out after something to eat!" laughed Carl. "You always get into trouble!"

"But I always get back, don't I?" demanded Jimmie. "I guess the time will come, before long, when you'll be glad to see me starting out for some kind of game! We're not going to remain quietly here and starve."

"That looks like going out hunting," said Sam, pointing to the savages outside. "Those fellows might have something to say about it."

It was now broad daylight. The early sunshine lay like a mist of gold over the tops of the distant peaks, and birds were cutting the clear, sweet air with their sharp cries. Many of the Indians outside being sun worshipers, the boys saw them still on their knees with hands and face uplifted to the sunrise.

The air in the valley was growing warmer every minute. By noon, when the sun would look almost vertically down, it promised to be very hot, as the mountains shut out the breeze.

"I don't think it will be necessary to look for game," Sam went on in a moment, "for the reason that the *Louise* and *Bertha,* ought to be here soon after sunset. It may possibly take them a little longer than that to cover the distance, as they do not sail so fast as the *Ann,* but at least they should be here before to-morrow morning. Then you'll see the savages scatter!" he added with a smile. "And you'll see Jimmie eat, too!"

"Don't mention it!" cried the boy.

"Yes," Carl suggested, "but won't Mr. Havens and the boys remain in Quito two or three days waiting for us to come back?"

"I think not," was the reply. "I arranged with Mr. Havens to pick us up somewhere between Quito and Lake Titicaca in case we did not return before morning. I have an idea that they'll start out some-

time during the forenoon—say ten o'clock—and reach this point, at the latest, by midnight."

"They can't begin to sail as fast as we did!" suggested Carl.

"If they make forty miles an hour," Sam explained, "and stop only three or four times to rest, they can get here before midnight, all right!"

"Gee! That's a long time to go without eating!" cried Jimmie. "And, even at that," he went on in a moment, "they may shoot over us like a couple of express trains, and go on south without ever knowing we are here."

Sam turned to Pedro with an inquiring look on his face.

"Where is Miguel?" he asked.

Pedro shook his head mournfully.

"Gone!" he said.

"Well, then," Sam went on, "what about the red and blue lights? Can you stage that little drama for us to-night?"

"What is stage?" demanded Pedro. "I don't know what you mean."

"Chestnuts!" exclaimed Jimmie impatiently. "He wants to know if you can work the lights as Miguel did. He wants to know if you can keep the lights burning to-night in order to attract the attention of people who are coming to drive the Indians away. Do you get it?"

Pedro's face brightened perceptibly.

"Coming to drive the Indians away?" he repeated. "Yes, I can burn the lights. They shall burn from the going down of the sun. Also," he added with a hopeful expression on his face, "the Indians may see the lights and disappear again in the forest."

"Yes, they will!" laughed Carl.

"Let him think so if he wants to," cautioned Jimmie. "He'll take better care of the lights if he thinks that will in any way add to the possibility of release. But midnight!" the boy went on. "Think of all that time without anything to eat! Say," he whispered to Carl, in a soft aside, "if you can get Sam asleep sometime during the day and get the gun away from him, I'm going to make a break for the tall timber and bring in a deer, or a brace of rabbits, or something of that kind. There's plenty of cooking utensils in that other chamber and plenty of dishes, so we can have a mountain stew with very little trouble if we can only get the meat to put into it."

"And there's the stew they left," suggested Carl.

"Not for me!" Jimmie answered. "I'm not going to take any chances on being poisoned. I'd rather build a fire on that dizzy old hearth they used, and broil a steak from one of the jaguars than eat that stew—or anything they left for that matter."

"I don't believe you can get out into the hills," objected Carl.

"I can try," Jimmie suggested, "if I can only get that gun away from Sam. He wouldn't let me go. You know that very well! Look here," he went on, "suppose I fix up in the long, flowing robe, and dig up the wigs and things Miguel must have worn, and walk in a dignified manner between the ranks of the Indians? What do you know about that?"

"That would probably be all right," Carl answered, "until you began shooting game, and then they'd just naturally put you into a stew. They know very well that gods in white robes don't have to kill game in order to sustain life."

"Oh, why didn't you let me dream?" demanded Jimmie. "I was just figuring how I could get about four gallons of stew."

Abandoning the cherished hope of getting out into the forest for the time being, Jimmie now approached Pedro and began asking him questions concerning his own stock of provisions.

"According to your own account," the boy said, "you've been living here right along for some weeks, taking care of the wild animals as the collectors brought them in. Now you must have plenty of provisions stored away somewhere. Dig 'em up!"

Pedro declared that there were no provisions at

all about the place, adding that everything had been consumed the previous day except the remnants left in the living chamber. He said, however, that he expected provisions to be brought in by his two companions within two days. In the meantime, he had arranged on such wild game as he could bring down.

Abandoning another hope, Jimmie passed through the narrow passage and into the chamber where he had come so near to death. The round eye of his searchlight revealed the jaguars still lying on the marble floor.

The roof above this chamber appeared to be comparatively whole, yet here and there the warm sunlight streamed in through minute crevices between the slabs. The boy crossed the chamber, not without a little shiver of terror at the thought of the dangers he had met there, and peered into the mouth of the den from which the wild beasts had made their appearance.

The odor emanating from the room beyond was not at all pleasant, but, resolving to see for himself what the place contained, he pushed on and soon stood in a subterranean room hardly more than twelve feet square. There were six steps leading down into the chamber, and these seemed to the boy to be worn and polished smooth as if from long use.

"It's a bet!" the lad chuckled, as he crawled

through the opening and slid cautiously down the steps, " that this stairway was used a hundred times a day while the old priests lived here. In that case," he argued, " there must have been some reason for constant use of the room. And all this," he went on, " leads me to the conclusion that the old fellows had a secret way out of the temple and that it opens from this very room."

While the boy stood at the bottom of the steps flashing his light around the confined space, Carl's figure appeared into the opening above.

" What have you found? " the latter asked.

" Nothing yet but bad air and stone walls! " replied Jimmie.

" What are you looking for? " was the next question.

" A way out! " answered Jimmie.

Carl came down the steps and the two boys examined the chamber carefully for some evidence of a hidden exit. They were about to abandon the quest when Jimmie struck the handle of his pocket knife, which he had been using in the investigation, against a stone which gave back a hollow sound. Carl rushed to his side instantly.

" Here you are! " Jimmie cried. " There's a hole back of that stone. If we can only get it out, we'll kiss the savages ' good-by ' and get back to the *Ann* in quick time."

The boys pried and pounded at the stone until at last it gave way under pressure and fell backward with a crash.

"There!" Jimmie shouted. "I knew it!"

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE THE PASSAGE ENDED.

"YES, you knew it all right!" Carl exclaimed, as the boy stood looking into the dark passage revealed by the falling of the stone. "You always know a lot of things just after they occur!"

"Anyway," Jimmie answered with a grin, "I knew there ought to be a secret passage somewhere. Where do you suppose the old thing leads to?"

"For one thing," Carl answered, "it probably leads under the great stone slab in front of the entrance, because when Miguel, the foxy boy with the red and blue lights, disappeared he went down into the ground right there. And I'll bet, "he went on, "that it runs out to the rocky elevation to the west and connects with the forest near where the machine is."

"Those old chaps must have burrowed like rabbits!" declared Jimmie.

"Don't you think the men who operated the temples ever carried the stones which weigh a hundred tons or cut passages through solid rocks!"

Carl declared. "They worked the Indians for all that part of the game, just as the Egyptians worked the Hebrews on the lower Nile."

"Well, the only way to find out where it goes," Jimmie suggested, "is to follow it. We can't stand here and guess it out."

"Indeed we can't," agreed Carl. "I'll go on down the incline and you follow along. Looks pretty slippery here, so we'd better keep close together. I don't suppose we can put the stone back," he added with a parting glance into the chamber.

"What would we want to put it back for?" demanded Jimmie.

"How do we know who will be snooping around here while we are under ground?" Carl asked impatiently. "If some one should come along here and stuff the stone back into the hole and we shouldn't be able to find any exit, we'd be in a nice little tight box, wouldn't we?"

"Well, if we can't lift it back into the hole," Jimmie argued, "I guess we can push it along in front of us. This incline seems slippery enough to pass it along like a sleighload of girls on a snowy hill."

The boys concentrated their strength, which was not very great at that time because of their wounds, on the stone and were soon gratified to see it sliding swiftly out of sight along a dark incline.

"I wonder what Sam will say?" asked Jimmie.

"He won't know anything about it!" Carl declared.

"Oh, yes, he will!" asserted Jimmie, "he'll be looking around before we've been absent ten minutes. Perhaps we'd ought to go back and tell him what we've found, and what we're going to do."

"Then he'd want to go with us," Carl suggested, "and that would leave the savages to sneak into the temple whenever they find the nerve to do so, and also leave Pedro to work any old tricks he saw fit. Besides," the boy went on, "we won't be gone more than ten minutes."

"You're always making a sneak on somebody," grinned Jimmie. "You had to go and climb up on our machine last night, and get mixed up in all this trouble. You're always doing something of the kind!"

"I guess you're glad I stuck around, ain't you?" laughed Carl. "You'd 'a' had a nice time in that den of lions without my gun, eh?"

"Well, get a move on!" laughed Jimmie. "And hang on to the walls as you go ahead. This floor looks like one of the chutes under the newspaper offices in New York. And hold your light straight ahead."

The incline extended only a few yards. Arrived at the bottom, the boys estimated that the top of the six-foot passage was not more than a couple of yards from the surface of the earth. Much to their

surprise they found the air in the place remarkably pure.

At the bottom of the incline the passage turned away to the north for a few paces, then struck out west. From this angle the boys could see little fingers of light which probably penetrated into the passage from crevices in the steps of the temple.

Gaining the front of the old structure, they saw that one of the stones just below the steps was hung on a rude though perfectly reliable hinge, and that a steel rod attached to it operated a mechanism which placed the slab entirely under the control of any one mounting the steps, if acquainted with the secret of the door.

"Here's where Miguel drops down!" laughed Jimmie, his searchlight prying into the details of the cunning device. "Well, well!" he went on, "those old Incas certainly took good care of their precious carcasses. It's a pity they couldn't have coaxed the Spaniards into some of their secret passages and then sealed them up!"

The passage ran on to the west after passing the temple for some distance, and then turned abruptly to the north. The lights showed a long, tunnel-like place, apparently cut in the solid rock.

"I wonder if this tunnel leads to the woods we saw at the west of the cove," Carl asked. "I hope it does!" he added, "for then we can get to the machine and get something to eat and get some

ammunition and," he added hopefully, "we may be able to get away in the jolly old *Ann* and leave the Indians watching an empty temple."

"Do you suppose Miguel came into this passage when he dropped out of sight in front of the temple?" asked Jimmie.

"Of course, he did!"

"Then where did he go?"

"Why, back into the temple."

"Through the den of lions? I guess not!"

"That's a fact!" exclaimed Carl. "He wouldn't go through the den of lions, would he? And he never could have traveled this passage to the end and hiked back over the country in time to drop the gate and lift the bars in front of the den! It was Miguel that did that, wasn't it?" the boy added, turning enquiringly to his chum. "It must have been for there was no one else there."

"What are you getting at?" asked Jimmie.

"This," replied Carl. "There must be a passage leading from this one back into the temple on the west side. It may enter the room where the bunks are, or it may come into the corridor back by the fountain, but there's one somewhere all right."

"You're the wise little boy!" laughed Jimmie. "Let's go and see."

The boys returned to the trap-like slab in front of the temple and from that point examined every inch of the south wall for a long distance. Finally

a push on a stone brought forth a grinding noise, and then a passage similar to that discovered in the den was revealed.

"There you are!" said Carl. "There's the passage that leads to the west side of the temple. Shall we go on in and give Sam and Pedro the merry ha, ha? Mighty funny," he added, without waiting for his question to be answered, "that all these trap doors are so easily found and work so readily. They're just about as easy to manipulate as one of the foolish houses we see on the stage. It's no trick to operate them at all."

"Well," Jimmie argued, "these passages and traps are doubtless used every day by a man who don't take any precautions about keeping them hidden. I presume Miguel is the only person here who knows of their existence, and he just slams around in them sort of careless-like."

"That's the answer!" replied Carl. "Let's chase along and see where the tunnel ends, and then get back to Sam. He may be crying his eyes out for our polite society right now!"

The boys followed the tunnel for what seemed to them to be a long distance. At length they came to a turn from which a mist of daylight could be seen. In five minutes more they stood looking out into the forest.

The entrance to the passage was concealed only by carelessly heaped-up rocks, between the in-

terstices of which grew creeping vines and brambles. Looking from the forest side, the place resembled a heap of rocks, probably inhabited by all manner of creepings things and covered over with vines.

As the boys peered out between the vines, Jimmie nudged his chum in the side and whispered as he pointed straight out:

"There's the *Ann.*"

"But that isn't where we left her!" argued Carl.

"Well, it's the *Ann,* just the same, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," was the reply. "I presume," the boy went on, "the Indians moved it to the place where it now is."

"Don't you ever think they did!" answered Jimmie. "The Indians wouldn't touch it with a pair of tongs! Felix and Pedro probably moved it, the idea being to hide it from view."

"I guess that's right!" Carl agreed. "I'm going out," he continued, in a moment, "and see if I can find any savages. You lie low till I get back. I won't be gone very long."

"What you mean," Jimmie grinned, "is that you're going out to see if you won't find any savages. That is," he went on, "you think of going out. As a matter of fact, I'm the one that's going out, because the wild beasts chewed you up proper, and they didn't hurt me at all."

The boy crowded past Carl as he spoke and dodged out into the forest. Carl waited impatiently

for ten minutes and was on the point of going in quest of the boy when Jimmie came leisurely up to the curtain of vines which hid the passage and looked in with a grin on his freckled face.

"Come on out," he said, "the air is fine!"

"Any savages?" asked Carl.

"Not a savage!"

"Anything to eat?" demanded the boy.

"Bales of it!" answered Jimmie. "The savages never touched the *Ann.*"

Carl crept out of the opening and made his way to where Jimmie sat flat on the bole of a fallen tree eating ham sandwiches.

"Are there any left?" he asked.

"Half a bushel!"

"Then perhaps the others stand some chance of getting one or two."

"There's more than we can all eat before to-morrow morning," Jimmie answered. "And if the relief train doesn't come before that time we'll mount the *Ann* and glide away."

While the boys sat eating their sandwiches and enjoying the clear sweet air of the morning, there came an especially savage chorus of yells from the direction of the temple.

"The Indians seem to be a mighty enthusiastic race!" declared Jimmie. "Suppose we go to the *Ann,* grab the provisions, and go back to the temple

just to see what they're amusing themselves with now!"

This suggestion meeting with favor, the boys proceeded to the aeroplane which was only a short distance away and loaded themselves down with provisions and cartridges. During their journey they saw not the slightest indications of the Indians. It was quite evident that they were all occupied with the *siege* of the temple.

On leaving the entrance, the boys restored the vines so far as possible to their original condition and filled their automatics with cartridges.

"No one will ever catch me without cartridges again," Carl declared as he patted his weapon. "The idea of getting into a den of lions with only four shots between us and destruction!"

"Well, hurry up!" cried Jimmie. "I know from the accent the Indians placed on the last syllable that there's something doing at the temple. And Sam, you know, hasn't got many cartridges."

"I wouldn't run very fast," declared Carl, "if I knew that the Indians had captured Miguel. That's the ruffian who shut us into the den of lions!"

When the boys came to the passage opening from the tunnel on the west of the temple, they turned into it and proceeded a few yards south. Here they found an opening which led undoubtedly directly to the rear of the corridor in the vicinity of the fountain.

The stone which had in past years concealed the mouth of this passage had evidently not been used for a long time, for it lay broken into fragments on the stone floor.

When the boys came to the end of the passage, they saw by the slices of light which lay between the stones that they were facing the corridor from the rear. They knew well enough that somewhere in that vicinity was a door opening into the temple, but for some moments they could not find it. At last Jimmie, prying into a crack with his knife, struck a piece of metal and the stone dropped backward.

He was about to crawl through into the corridor when Carl caught him by one leg and held him back. It took the lad only an instant to comprehend what was going on. A horde of savages was crowding up the steps and into the temple itself, and Sam stood in the middle of the corridor with a smoking weapon in his hand.

As the boys looked he threw the automatic into the faces of the onrushing crowd as if its usefulness had departed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SAVAGES MAKE MORE TROUBLE.

"PEDRO said the savages wouldn't dare enter the temple!" declared Jimmie as he drew back.

Without stopping to comment on the situation, Carl called out:

"Drop, Sam, drop!"

The young man whirled about, saw the opening in the rear wall, saw the brown barrels of the automatics, and instantly dropped to the floor. The Indians advanced no farther, for in less time than it takes to say the words a rain of bullets struck into their ranks. Half a dozen fell to the floor and the others retreated, sneaking back in a minute, however, to remove the bodies of their dead and wounded companions.

The boys did not fire while this duty was being performed.

In a minute from the time of the opening of the stone panel in the wall there was not a savage in sight. Only for the smears of blood on the white marble floor, and on the steps outside, no one would

have imagined that so great a tragedy had been enacted there only a few moments before. Sam rose slowly to his feet and stood by the boys as they crawled out of the narrow opening just above the basin of the fountain.

"I'm glad to see you, kids," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone, although his face was white to the lips. "You came just in time!"

"We usually do arrive on schedule," Jimmie grinned, trying to make as little as possible of the rescue.

"You did this time at any rate!" replied Sam. "But, look here," he went on, glancing at the automatics in their hands, "I thought the ammunition was all used up in the den of lions."

"We got some more!" laughed Carl.

"More—where?"

"At the *Ann!*"

Sam leaned back against the wall, a picture of amazement.

"You haven't been out to the *Ann* have you?" he asked.

For reply Jimmie drew a great package of sandwiches and another of cartridges out of the opening in the wall.

"We haven't, eh?" he laughed.

"That certainly looks like it!" declared Sam.

The boys briefly related the story of their visit to the aeroplane while Sam busied himself with the

sandwiches, and then they loaded the three automatics and distributed the remaining clips about their persons.

"And now what?" asked Carl, after the completion of the recital.

"Are we going to take the *Ann* and slip away from these worshipers of the Sun?" asked Jimmie. "We can do it all right!"

"I don't know about that," argued Sam. "You drove them away from the temple, and the chances are that they will return to the forest and will remain there until they get the courage to make another attack on us."

"It won't take long to go and find out whether they are in the forest or not!" Carl declared.

"Perhaps," Sam suggested, "we'd better wait here for the others to come up. They ought to be here to-night."

"If it's a sure thing that we can let them know where we are," Carl agreed, "that might be all right."

"What's the matter with the red and blue lights?" asked Jimmie.

"By the way," Carl inquired looking about the place, "where is Pedro?"

"He took to his heels when the savages made the rush."

"Which way did he go?" asked Jimmie.

"I think he went in the direction of that little

menagerie you boys found last night!" replied Sam.

"Then I'll bet he knows where the tunnel is!" Carl shouted, dashing away. "I'll bet he's lit out for the purpose of bringing a lot of his conspirators in here to do us up!"

Jimmie followed his chum, and the two searched the entire system of tunnels known to them without discovering any trace of the missing man.

"That's a nice thing!" Jimmie declared. "We probably passed him somewhere on our way back to the temple. By this time he's off over the hills, making signals for some one to come and help put us to the bad."

"I'm afraid you're right!" replied Sam.

The boys ate their sandwiches and discussed plans and prospects, listening in the meantime for indications of the two missing men. Several times they thought they heard soft footsteps in the apartments opening from the corridor, but in each case investigation revealed nothing.

It was a long afternoon, but finally the sun disappeared over the ridge to the west of the little lake and the boys began considering the advisability of making ready to signal to the *Louise* and *Bertha*.

"They will surely be here?" said Carl hopefully.

"I am certain of it!" answered Sam.

"Then we'd better be getting something on top of the temple to make a light," advised Jimmie. "If

I had Miguel by the neck, he'd bring out his red and blue lights before he took another breath!" he added.

"Perhaps we can find the lights," suggested Sam.

This idea being very much to the point, the boys scattered themselves over the three apartments and searched diligently for the lamps or candles which had been used by Miguel on the previous night.

"Nothing doing!" Jimmie declared, returning to the corridor.

"Nothing doing!" echoed Carl, coming in from the other way.

Sam joined the group in a moment looking very much discouraged.

"Boys," he said, "I've been broke in nearly all the large cities on both Western continents. I've been kicked out of lodging houses, and I've walked hundreds of miles with broken shoes and little to eat, but of all the everlasting, consarned, ridiculous, propositions I ever butted up against, this is the worst!"

The boys chuckled softly but made no reply.

"We know well enough," he went on, "that there are rockets, or lamps, or torches, or candles, enough hidden about this place to signal all the transcontinental trains in the world but we can't find enough of them to flag a hand-car on an uphill grade!"

"What's the matter with the searchlights?" asked Jimmie.

"Not sufficiently strong!"

Without any explanation, Jimmie darted away from the group and began a tour of the temple. First he walked along the walls of the corridor then darted to the other room, then out on the steps in front.

"His trouble has turned his head!" jeered Carl.

"Look here, you fellows!" Jimmie answered darting back into the temple. "There's a great white rock on the cliff back of the temple. It looks like one of these memorial stones aldermen put their names on when they build a city hall. All we have to do to signal the aeroplanes is to put red caps over our searchlights and turn them on that cliff. They will make a circle of fire there that will look like the round, red face of a harvest moon."

"That's right!" agreed Carl.

"A very good idea!" Sam added.

"I've been trying to find a way to get up on the roof," Jimmie continued, "but can't find one. You see," he went on, "we can operate our searchlights better from the top of the temple."

"We'll have to find a way to get up there!" Sam insisted.

"Unless we can make the illumination on the cliff through the hole in the roof," Jimmie proposed.

"And that's another good proposition!" Sam agreed.

"And so," laughed Carl, "the stage is set and the actors are in the wings, and I'm going to crawl into one of the bunks in the west room and go to sleep."

"You go, too, Jimmie," Sam advised. "I'll wake you up if anything happens. I can get my rest later on."

The boys were not slow in accepting the invitation, and in a very short time were sound asleep. It would be time for the *Bertha* and *Louise* to show directly, and so Sam placed the red caps over the lamps of two of the electrics and sat where he could throw the rays through the break in the roof. Curious to know if the result was exactly as he anticipated, he finally propped one of the lights in position on the floor and went out to the entrance to look up at the rock.

As he stepped out on the smooth slab of marble in front of the entrance something whizzed within an inch of his head and dropped with a crash on the stones below. Without stopping to investigate the young man dodged into the temple again and looked out.

"Now, I wonder," he thought, as he lifted the electric so that its red light struck the smooth face of the rock above more directly, "whether that kind remembrance was from our esteemed friends

Pedro and Miguel, or whether it came from the Indians."

He listened intently for a moment and presently heard the sound of shuffling feet from above. It was apparent that the remainder of the evening was not to be as peaceful and quiet as he had anticipated.

Realizing that the hostile person or persons on the roof might in a moment begin dropping their rocks down to the floor of the corridor, he passed hastily into the west chamber and stood by the doorway looking out.

This interference, he understood, would effectually prevent any illumination of the white rock calculated to serve as a signal to Mr. Havens and the boys. Some other means of attracting their attention must be devised. The corridor lay dim in the faint light of the stars which came through the break in the roof, and he threw the light of his electric up and down the stone floor in order to make sure that the enemy was not actually creeping into the temple from the entrance.

While he stood flashing the light about he almost uttered an exclamation of fright as a grating sound in the vicinity of the fountain came to his ears. He cast his light in that direction and saw the stone which had been replaced by the boys retreating slowly into the wall.

Then a dusky face looked out of the opening, and, without considering the ultimate consequences

of his act, he fired full at the threatening eyes which were searching the interior. There was a groan, a fall, and the stone moved back to its former position.

He turned to awaken Jimmie and Carl but the sound of the shot had already accomplished that, and the boys were standing in the middle of the floor with automatics in their hand.

"What's coming off?" asked Jimmie.

"Was that thunder?" demanded Carl.

"Thunder don't smell like that," suggested Jimmie, sniffing at the powder smoke. "I guess Sam has been having company."

"Right you are," said Sam, doing his best to keep the note of apprehension out of his voice. "Our friends are now occupying the tunnel you told me about. At least one of them was, not long ago."

"Now, see here," Jimmie broke in, "I'm getting tired of this hide-and-seek business around this blooming old ruin. We came out to sail in the air, and not crawl like snakes through underground passages."

"What's the answer?" asked Carl.

"According to Sam's story," Jimmie went on, "we won't be able to signal our friends with our red lights to-night. In that case, they're likely to fly by, on their way south, without discovering our whereabouts."

"And so you want to go back to the machine, eh?" Sam questioned.

"That's the idea," answered Jimmie. "I want to get up into God's free air again, where I can see the stars, and the snow caps on the mountains! I want to build a roaring old fire on some shelf of rock and build up a stew big enough for a regiment of state troops! Then I want to roll up in a blanket and sleep for about a week."

"That's me, too!" declared Carl.

"It may not be possible to get to the machine," suggested Sam.

"I'll let you know in about five minutes!" exclaimed Jimmie darting recklessly across the corridor and into the chamber which had by mutual consent been named the den of lions.

Sam called to him to return but the boy paid no heed to the warning.

"Come on!" Carl urged the next moment. "We've got to go with him."

Sam seized a package of sandwiches which lay on the roughly constructed table and darted with the boy across the corridor, through the east chamber, into the subterranean one, and passed into the tunnel, the entrance to which, it will be remembered, had been left open.

Some distance down in the darkness, probably where the passage swung away to the north, they saw a glimmer of light. Directly they heard Jim-

mie's voice calling softly through the odorous darkness.

"Come on!" he whispered. "We may as well get out to the woods and see what's doing there."

The two half-walked, half-stumbled, down the slippery incline and joined Jimmie at the bottom.

"Now we want to look out," the boy said as they came to the angle which faced the west. "There may be some of those rude persons in the tunnel ahead of us."

Not caring to proceed in the darkness, they kept their lights burning as they advanced. When they came to the cross passage which led to the rear of the corridor they listened for an instant and thought they detected a low murmur of voices in the distance.

"Let's investigate!" suggested Carl.

"Investigate nothing!" replied Jimmie. "Let's move for the machine and the level of the stars. If the savages are there, we'll chase 'em out."

But the savages were not there. When the three came to the curtain of vines which concealed the entrance to the passage, the forest seemed as still as it had been on the day of creation.

They moved out of the tangle and crept forward to the aeroplane, their lights now out entirely, and their automatics ready for use. They were soon at the side of the machine.

After as good an examination as could possibly

be made in the semi-darkness, Sam declared that nothing had been molested, and that the *Ann* was, apparently, in as good condition for flight as it had been at the moment of landing.

"Why didn't we do this in the afternoon, while the niggers were out of sight?" asked Carl in disgust.

"Sam said we couldn't!" grinned Jimmie.

"Anyhow," Sam declared, "we're going to see right now whether we can or not. We'll have to push the old bird out into a clear place first, though!"

Here the talk was interrupted by a chorus of savage shouts.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE ANDES.

THE *Louise* and the *Bertha* left the field near Quito amid the shouts of a vast crowd which gathered in the early part of the day. As the aeroplanes sailed majestically into the air, Mr. Havens saw Mellen sitting in a motor-car waving a white handkerchief in farewell.

The millionaire and Ben rode in the *Louise,* while Glenn followed in the *Bertha.* For a few moments the clatter of the motors precluded conversation, then the aviator slowed down a trifle and asked his companion:

"Was anything seen of Doran to-day?"

Ben shook his head.

"I half believe," Mr. Havens continued, "that the code despatches were stolen by him last night from the hotel, copied, and the copies sent out to the field to be delivered to some one of the conspirators."

"But no one could translate them," suggested Ben.

"I'm not so sure of that," was the reply. "The code is by no means a new one. I have often reproached myself for not changing it after Redfern disappeared with the money."

"If it's the same code you used then," Ben argued, "you may be sure there is some one of the conspirators who can do the translating. Why," he went on, "there must be. They wouldn't have stolen code despatches unless they knew how to read them."

"In that case," smiled Mr. Havens grimly, "they have actually secured the information they desire from the men they are fighting."

"Were the messages important?" asked Ben.

"Duplicates of papers contained in deposit box A," was the answer.

"What can they learn from them?"

"The route mapped out for our journey south!" was the reply. "Including the names of places where Redfern may be in hiding."

"And so they'll be apt to guard all those points?" asked Ben.

As the reader will understand, one point, that at the ruined temple, had been very well guarded indeed!

"Yes," replied the millionaire. "They are likely to look out for us at all the places mentioned in the code despatches."

Ben gave a low whistle of dismay, and directly

the motors were pushing the machine forward at the rate of fifty or more miles an hour.

The aviators stopped on a level plateau about the middle of the afternoon to prepare dinner, and then swept on again. At nightfall, they were in the vicinity of a summit which lifted like a cone from a circular shelf of rock which almost completely surrounded it.

The millionaire aviator encircled the peak and finally decided that a landing might be made with safety. He dropped the *Louise* down very slowly and was gratified to find that there would be little difficulty in finding a resting-place below. As soon as he landed he turned his eyes toward the *Bertha,* still circling above.

The machine seemed to be coming steadily toward the shelf, but as he looked the great planes wavered and tipped, and when the aeroplane actually landed it was with a crash which threw Glenn from his seat and brought about a great rattling of machinery.

Glenn arose from the rock wiping blood from his face.

"I'm afraid that's the end of the *Bertha!*" he exclaimed.

"I hope not," replied Ben. "I think a lot of that old machine."

Mr. Havens, after learning that Glenn's injuries

were not serious, hastened over to the aeroplane and began a careful examination of the motors.

"I think," he said in a serious tone, "that the threads on one of the turn-buckles on one of the guy wires stripped so as to render the planes unmanageable."

"They were unmanageable, all right!" Glenn said, rubbing the sore spots on his knees.

"Can we fix it right here?" Ben asked.

"That depends on whether we have a supply of turn-buckles," replied Havens. "They certainly ought to be in stock somewhere."

"Glory be!" cried Glenn. "We sure have plenty of turn-buckles!"

"Get one out, then," the millionaire directed, "and we'll see what we can do with it."

The boys hunted everywhere in the tool boxes of both machines without finding what they sought.

"I know where they are!" said Glenn glumly in a moment.

"Then get one out!" advised Ben.

"They're on the *Ann!*" explained Glenn. "If you remember we put the spark plugs and a few other things of that sort on the *Louise* and put the turn-buckles on the *Ann.*"

"Now, you wait a minute," Mr. Havens advised. "Perhaps I can use the old turn-buckle on the sharp threads of the *Louise* and put the one which belongs there in the place of this worn one. Sometimes a

transfer of that kind can be made to work in emergencies."

"That'll be fine!" exclaimed Ben. "I remember seeing that tried myself. I'll hold the light while you take the buckle off the *Louise*."

Ben turned his flashlight on the guy wires and the aviator began turning the buckle. The wires were very taut, and when the last thread was reached one of them sprang away so violently that the turnbuckle was knocked from his hand. The next moment they heard it rattling in the gorge below.

Mr. Havens sat flat down on the shelf of rocks and looked at the parted wires hopelessly. The boys had nothing to say.

"Well," the millionaire said presently, "I guess we're in for a good long cold night up in the sky."

"Did you ever see such rotten luck?" demanded Glenn.

"Cheer up!" cried Ben. "We'll find some way out of it."

"Have you got any fish-lines, boys?" asked the aviator.

"You bet I have!" replied Ben. "You wouldn't catch me off on a flying-machine trip without a fish-line. We're going to have some fish before we get off the Andes."

"Well," said Mr. Havens, "pass it over and I'll see if I can fasten these wires together with strong cord and tighten them up with a twister."

"Why not?" asked Ben.

"I've seen things of that kind done often enough!" declared Glenn.

"And, besides," Glenn added, "we may be able to use the worn turn-buckle on the *Louise* and go after repairs, leaving the *Bertha* here."

"I don't like to do that!" objected the millionaire aviator. "I believe we can arrange to take both machines out with us."

But it was not such an easy matter fastening the cords and arranging the twister as had been anticipated. They all worked over the problem for an hour or more without finding any method of preventing the fish-line from breaking when the twister was applied. When drawn so tight that it was impossible to slip, the eyes showed a disposition to cut the strands.

At last they decided that it would be unsafe to use the *Bertha* in that condition and turned to the *Louise* with the worn turn-buckle.

To their dismay they found that the threads were worn so that it would be unsafe to trust themselves in the air with any temporary expedient which might be used to strengthen the connection.

"This brings us back to the old proposition of a night under the clouds!" the millionaire said.

"Or above the clouds," Ben added, "if this fog keeps coming."

Leaving the millionaire still studying over the

needed repairs, Ben and his chum followed the circular cliff for some distance until they came to the east side of the cone. They stood looking over the landscape for a moment and then turned back to the machines silently and with grave faces.

"Have you got plenty of ammunition, Mr. Havens?" Ben asked.

"I think so," was the reply.

"That's good!" answered Ben.

"Why the question?" Mr. Havens asked, with a surprised look.

"Because," Ben replied, "there's a lot of Peruvian miners down on a lower shelf of this cone and they're drunk."

"Well, they can't get up here, can they?" asked Mr. Havens.

"They're making a stab at it!" answered Ben.

"There seems to be a strike or something of that sort on down there," Glenn explained, "and it looks as if the fellows wanted to get up here and take possession of the aeroplanes."

"Perhaps we can talk them out of it!" smiled the millionaire.

"I'm afraid we'll have to do something more than talk," Glenn answered.

The three now went to the east side of the cone and looked down. There was a gully leading from the shelf to a plateau below. At some past time this gully had evidently been the bed of a running

mountain stream. On the pleateau below were excavations and various pieces of crude mining machinery.

Between the excavations and the bottom of the gully at least a hundred men were racing for the cut, which seemed to offer an easy mode of access to the shelf where the flying machines lay.

"We'll have to stand here and keep them back!" Mr. Havens decided.

"I don't believe we can keep them back," Glenn answered, "for there may be other places similar to this. Those miners can almost climb a vertical wall."

The voices of the miners could now be distinctly heard, and at least three or four of them were speaking in English.

"Keep back!" Mr. Havens warned as they came nearer.

His words were greeted by a howl of derision.

"Perhaps," Mr. Havens said in a moment, "one of you would better go back to the machines and see if there is danger from another point."

Ben started away, but paused and took his friend by the arm.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded, pointing away to the south.

Mr. Havens grasped the boy's hand and in the excitement of the moment shook it vigorously.

"I think," he answered, "that those are the

lights of the *Ann,* and that we'll soon have all the turn-buckles we want."

The prophesy was soon verified. The *Ann* landed with very little difficulty, and the boys were soon out on the ledge.

The miners drew back grumbling and soon disappeared in the excavations below.

As may well be imagined the greetings which passed between the two parties were frank and heartfelt. The repair box of the *Ann* was well supplied with turn-buckles, and in a very short time the three machines were on their way to the south.

Mr. Havens and Sam sat together on the *Ann,* and during the long hours after midnight while the machines purred softly through the chill air of the mountains, the millionaire was informed of all that had taken place at the ruined temple.

"And that ruined temple you have described," Mr. Havens said, with a smile, "is in reality one of the underground stations on the way to the Mystery of the Andes at Lake Titicaca."

"And why?" asked Sam, "do they call any special point down there the mystery of the Andes? There are plenty of mysteries in these tough old mountain ranges!" he added with a smile.

"But this is a particularly mysterious kind of a mystery," replied Mr. Havens. "I'll tell you all about it some other time."

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO RUNAWAY BOYS!

A GREAT camp-fire blazed in one of the numerous valleys which nestle in the Andes to the east of Lake Titicaca. The three flying machines, the *Ann,* the *Louise* and the *Bertha,* lay just outside the circle of illumination. It was the evening of the fourth day after the incidents recorded in the last chapter.

The Flying Machine Boys had traveled at good speed, yet with frequent rests, from the mountain cone above the Peruvian mines to the little valley in which the machines now lay.

Jimmie and Carl, well wrapped in blankets, were lying with their feet extended toward the blaze, while Glenn was broiling venison steak at one corner of the great fire, and, also, as he frequently explained, broiling his face to a lobster finish while he turned the steaks about in order to get the exact finish.

The millionaire aviator and Sam sat some distance away discussing prospects and plans for the next day. While they talked an Indian accom-

panied by Ben came slowly out of the shadows at the eastern edge of the valley and approached the fire.

"Have you discovered the Mystery of the Andes?" asked Havens with a laugh as the two came up.

"We certainly have discovered the Mystery of the Andes!" cried Ben excitedly. "But we haven't discovered the mystery of the mystery!"

"Come again!" shouted Jimmie springing to his feet.

"You see," Ben went on, "Toluca took me to a point on the cliff to the south from which the ghost lights of the mysterious fortress can be seen, but we don't know any more about the origin of the lights than we did before we saw them."

"Then there really are lights?" asked Carl.

"There certainly are!" replied Ben.

"What kind of an old shop, is it?" asked Jimmie.

"It's one of the old-time fortresses," replied Ben. "It is built on a steep mountainside and guards a pass between this valley and one beyond. It looks as if it might have been a rather formidable fortress a few hundred years ago, but now a shot from a modern gun would send the battlements flying into the valley."

"But why the lights?" demanded Jimmie.

"That's the mystery!" Ben answered. They're ghost lights!"

"Up to within a few months," Mr. Havens began, "this fortress has never attracted much attention. It is said to be rather a large fortification, and some of the apartments are said to extend under the cliff, in the same manner as many of the gun rooms on Gibraltar extend into the interior of that solid old rock."

"More subterranean passages!" groaned Jimmie. "I never want to see or hear of one again. Ever since that experience at the alleged temple they will always smell of wild animals and powder smoke."

"A few months ago," the millionaire aviator continued, smiling tolerantly at the boy, "ghostly lights began making their appearance in the vicinity of the fort. American scientists who were in this part of the country at that time made a careful investigation of the demonstrations, and reported that the illuminations existed only in the imaginations of the natives. And yet, it is certain that the scientists were mistaken."

"More bunk!" exclaimed Carl.

"At first," Mr. Havens went on, "the natives kept religiously away from the old fort, but now they seem to be willing to gather in its vicinity and worship at the strange fires which glow from the ruined battlements. It is a strange combination, and that's a fact."

"How long have these lights been showing?" asked Sam.

"Perhaps six months," was the reply.

The young man regarded his employer significantly.

"I apprehend," he said, "that you know exactly what that means."

"I think I do!" was the reply.

"Put us wise to it!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Perhaps," smiled the millionaire, "I would better satisfy myself as to the truth of my theory before I say anything more about it."

"All right," replied the boy with the air of a much-abused person, "then I'll go back to my blanket and sleep for the rest of my three weeks!"

"If you do," Glenn cut in, "you'll miss one of these venison steaks."

Jimmie was back on his feet in a minute.

"Lead me to it!" he cried.

The boys still declare that that was the most satisfying meal of which they ever partook. The broiled steaks were excellent, and the tinned goods which had been purchased at one of the small Peruvian mining towns on the way down, were fresh and sweet.

As may be understood without extended description, the work of washing the dishes and cleaning up after the meal was not long extended!

In an hour every member of the party except Toluca was sound asleep. The Indian had been engaged on the recommendation of an acquaintance at

one of the towns on the line of the interior railroad, and was entirely trustworthy. He now sat just outside the circle of light, gazing with rapt attention in the direction of the fortress which for some time past had been known as the Mystery of the Andes.

A couple of hours passed, and then Ben rolled over to where Jimmie lay asleep, his feet toasting at the fire, his head almost entirely covered by his blanket.

"Wake up, sleepy-head!" Ben whispered.

Jimmie stirred uneasily in his slumber and half opened his eyes.

"Go on away!" he whispered.

"But look here!" Ben insisted. "I've got something to tell you!"

Toluca arose and walked over to where the two boys were sitting.

"Look here!" Ben went on. "Here's Toluca now, and I'll leave it to him if every word I say isn't true. He can't talk much United States, but he can nod when I make a hit. Can't you, Toluca?"

The Indian nodded and Ben went on:

"Between this valley," the boy explained, "and the face of the mountain against which the fort sticks like a porous plaster is another valley. Through this second valley runs a ripping, roaring, foaming, mountain stream which almost washes the face of the cliff against which the fortress

stands. This stream, you understand, is one of the original defences, as it cuts off approach from the north."

"I understand," said Jimmie sleepily.

"Now, the only way to reach this alleged mystery of the Andes from this direction seems to be to sail over this valley in one of the machines and drop down on the cliff at the rear."

"But is there a safe landing there?" asked the boy.

"Toluca says there is!"

"Has he been there?" asked Jimmie.

"Of course he has!" answered Ben. "He doesn't believe in the Inca superstitions about ghostly lights and all that."

"Then why don't we take one of the machines and go over there?" demanded Jimmie. "That would be fun!"

"That's just what I came to talk with you about?"

"I'm game for it!" the boy asserted.

"As a matter of fact," Ben explained as the boys arose and softly approached the *Louise,* "the only other known way of reaching the fortress is by a long climb which occupies about two days. Of course," he went on, "the old fellows selected the most desirable position for defence when they built the fort. That is," he added, "unless we reach it by the air route."

" The air line," giggled Jimmie, " is the line we're patronizing to-night."

" Of course!" Ben answered. " All previous explorers, it seems, have approached the place on foot, and by the winding ledges and paths leading to it. Now, naturally, the people who are engineering the ghost lights and all that sort of thing there see the fellows coming and get the apparatus out of sight before the visitors arrive."

" Does Mr. Havens know all about this?" asked Jimmie.

" You're dense, my son!" whispered Ben. " We've come all this way to light down on the fortress in the night-time without giving warning of our approach. That's why we came here in the flying machines."

" He thinks Redfern is here?" asked Jimmie.

" He thinks this is a good place to look for him!" was the reply.

" Then we'll beat him to it!" Jimmie chuckled.

Toluca seemed to understand what the boys were about to do and smiled grimly as the machine lifted from the ground and whirled softly away. As the *Louise* left the valley, Mr. Havens and Sam turned lazily in their blankets, doubtless disturbed by the sound of the motors, but, all being quiet about the camp, soon composed themselves to slumber again.

" Now, we'll have to go slowly!" Ben exclaimed as the machine lifted so that the lights of the distant

mystery came into view, "for the reason that we mustn't make too much noise. Besides," he went on, "we've got to switch off to the east, cut a wide circle around the crags, and come down on the old fort from the south."

"And when we get there?" asked Jimmie.

"Why, replied Ben, "we're going to land and sneak into the fort! That's what we're going for!"

"I hope we won't tumble into a lot of jaguars, and savages, and half-breed Spaniards!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Oh, we're just going to look now," Ben answered, "and when we find out what's going on there we're coming back and let Mr. Havens do the rest. We wouldn't like to take all the glory away from him."

Following this plan, the boys sent the machine softly away to the east, flying without lights, and at as low altitude as possible, until they were some distance away from the camp. Then they turned to the south.

In an hour the fortress showed to the north, or at least the summit under which it lay did.

"There's the landing-place just east of that cliff," Ben exclaimed, as he swung still lower down. "I'll see if I can hit it."

The *Louise* took kindly to the landing, and in ten minutes more the boys were moving cautiously in

the direction of the old fort, now lying dark and silent under the starlight. It seemed to Jimmie that his heart was in his throat as the possible solution of the mystery of the Andes drew near!

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO RUNAWAY AVIATORS!

HALF an hour after the departure of the *Louise,* Sam awoke with a start and moved over to where the millionaire aviator was sleeping.

"Time to be moving!" he whispered in his ear.

Mr. Havens yawned, stretched himself, and threw his blanket aside.

"I don't know," he said with a smile, "but we're doing wrong in taking all the credit of this game. The boys have done good work ever since leaving New York, and my conscience rather pricks me at the thought of leaving them out of the closing act."

"Well," Sam answered, "the boys are certainly made of the right material, if they are just a little too much inclined to take unnecessary risks. I wouldn't mind having them along, but, really, there's no knowing what one of them might do."

"Very well," replied Mr. Havens, "we'll get underway in the *Ann* and land on top of the fortress before the occupants of that musty old fortification know that we are in the air."

"That's the talk!" Sam agreed. "We'll make a wide circuit to the west and come up on that side of the summit which rises above the fort. I'm certain, from what I saw this afternoon, that there is a good landing-place there. Most of these Peruvian mountain chains," he went on, "are plentifully supplied with good landings, as the shelves and ledges which lie like terraces on the crags were formerly used as highways and trails by the people who lived here hundreds of years ago."

"We must be very careful in getting away from the camp," Mr. Havens suggested. "We don't want the boys to suspect that we are going off on a little adventure of our own."

"Very well," replied the other, "I'll creep over in the shadows and push the *Ann* down the valley so softly that they'll never know what's taken place. If you walk down a couple of hundred yards, I'll pick you up. Then we'll be away without disturbing any one."

So eager were the two to leave the camp without their intentions being discovered by the others, that they did not stop to see whether all the three machines were still in place. The *Ann* stood farthest to the east, next to the *Bertha,* and Sam crept in between the two aeroplanes and began working the *Ann* slowly along the grassy sward.

Had he lifted his head for a moment and looked to the rear, he must have seen that only the *Bertha*

lay behind him. Had he investigated the two rolls of blankets lying near the fire, he would have seen that they covered no sleeping forms!

But none of these precautions were taken. The *Ann* moved noiselessly down the valley to where Mr. Havens awaited her and was sent into the air. The rattle of the motors seemed to the two men to be loud enough to bring any one within ten miles out of a sound sleep, but they saw no movements below, and soon passed out of sight.

Wheeling sharply off to the west, they circled cliffs, gorges and grassy valleys for an hour until they came to the western slope of the mountain which held the fortress. It will be remembered that the *Louise* had circled to the east.

"And now," Mr. Havens said as he slowed down, "if we find a landing-place here, even moderately secure, down we go. If I don't, I'll shoot up again and land squarely on top of the fort."

"I don't believe it's got any roof to land on!" smiled Sam.

"Yes, it has!" replied Mr. Havens. "I've had the old fraud investigated. I know quite a lot about her!"

"You have had her investigated?" asked Sam, in amazement.

"You know very well," the millionaire went on, "that we have long suspected Redfern to be hiding in this part of Peru. I can't tell you now how we

secured all the information we possess on the subject. It would take too much time.

"However, it is enough to say that by watching the mails and sending out messengers we have connected the rival trust company of which you have heard me speak with mysterious correspondents in Peru. The work has been long, but rather satisfying."

"Why," Sam declared, "I thought this expedition was a good deal of a guess! I hadn't any idea you knew so much about this country."

"We know more about it than is generally believed," was the answer. "Deposit box A, which was robbed on the night Ralph Hubbard was murdered, contained, as I have said, all the information we possessed regarding this case. When the papers were stolen I felt like giving up the quest, but the code telegrams cheered me up a bit, especially when they were stolen."

"I don't see anything cheerful in having the despatches stolen."

"It placed the information I possessed in the hands of my enemies, of course," the other went on, "but at the same time it set them to watching the points we had in a way investigated, and which they now understood that we intended to visit."

"I don't quite get you!" Sam said.

"You had an illustration of that at the haunted temple," Mr. Havens continued. "The Redfern

group knew that that place was on my list. By some quick movement, understood at this time only by themselves, they sent a man there to corrupt the custodian of the captive animals. You know what took place then. Only for courage and good sense, the machines would have been destroyed."

"The savages unwittingly helped some!" suggested Sam.

"Yes, everything seemed to work to your advantage," Mr. Havens continued. "At the mines, now," he continued, "we helped ourselves out of the trap set for us."

"You don't think the miners, too, were working under instructions?" asked Sam. "That seems impossible!"

"This rival trust company," Mr. Havens went on, "has agents in every part of the world. In Peru as elsewhere; especially in Peru. It is my belief that not only the men of the mine we came upon, but the men of every other mine along the Andes, were under instructions to look out for, and, under some pretense, destroy any flying machines which made their appearance."

"They are nervy fighters, anyway, if this is true!" Sam said.

"They certainly are, and for the very good reason that the arrest and conviction of Redfern would place stripes on half a dozen of the directors of the new company. As you have heard me say before,

the proof is almost positive that the money embezzled from us was placed in this new company. Redfern is a sneak, and will confess everything to protect himself. Hence, the interest of the trust company in keeping him out of sight."

"Well, I hope he won't get out of sight after to-night," suggested Sam. "I hope we'll have him good and tight before morning."

"I firmly believe that he will be taken to-night!" was the reply.

The machine was now only a short distance above the ledge upon which the aviator aimed to land. Even in the dim light they could see a level stretch of rock, and the *Ann* was soon resting easily within a short distance of the fort, now hidden only by an angle of the cliff.

Presently the two moved forward together and looked around the base of the cliff. The fort lay dark and silent in the night. So far as appearances were concerned, there had never been any lights displayed from her battlements during the long years which had passed away since her construction!

There was only a very narrow ledge between the northern wall of the fort and the precipice which struck straight down into the valley, three hundred feet below. In order to reach the interior of the fortification from the position they occupied, it would be necessary for Havens and his companion

to pass along this ledge and creep into an opening which faced the valley.

At regular intervals on the outer edge of this ledge were balanced great boulders, placed there in prehistoric times for use in case an attempt should be made to scale the precipice. A single one of these rocks, if cast down at the right moment might, have annihilated an army.

The two men passed along the ledge gingerly, for they understood that a slight push would send one of these boulders crashing down. At last they came to what seemed to be an entrance into the heart of the fortress. There were no lights in sight as they looked in. The place seemed utterly void of human life.

Sam crept in first and waited for his companion to follow. Mr. Havens sprang at the ledge of the opening, which was some feet above the level of the shelf on which he stood, and lifted himself by his arms. As he did so a fragment of rock under one hand gave way and he dropped back.

In saving himself he threw out both feet and reached for a crevice in the wall. This would have been an entirely safe procedure if his feet had not come with full force against one of the boulders overlooking the valley.

He felt the stone move under the pressure, and the next instant, with a noise like the discharge of a battery of artillery, the great boulder crashed

down the almost perpendicular face of the precipice and was shattered into a thousand fragments on a rock which lay at the verge of the stream below.

With a soft cry of alarm, Sam bent over the ledge which protected the opening and seized his employer by the collar. It was quick and desperate work then, for it was certain that every person within a circuit of many miles had heard the fall of the boulder.

Doubtless in less than a minute the occupants of the fortress—if such there were—would be on their feet ready to contest the entrance of the midnight visitors.

"We've got to get into some quiet nook mighty quick," Sam whispered in Mr. Havens' ear as the latter was drawn through the opening. "I guess the ringing of that old door-bell will bring the ghost out in a hurry!"

The two crouched in an angle of the wall at the front interior of the place and listened. Directly a light flashed out at the rear of what seemed to the watchers to be an apartment a hundred yards in length. Then footsteps came down the stone floor and a powerful arc light filled every crevice and angle of the great apartment with its white rays.

There was no need to attempt further concealment. The two sprang forward, reaching for their automatics, as three men with weapons pointing towards them advanced under the light.

"I guess," Sam whispered, "that this means a show-down."

"There's no getting out of that!" whispered Havens. "We have reached the end of the journey, for the man in the middle is Redfern!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE END OF THE MYSTERY.

As Redfern and his two companions advanced down the apartment, their revolvers leveled, Havens and Sam dropped their hands away from their automatics.

"Hardly quick enough, Havens," Redfern said, advancing with a wicked smile on his face. "To tell you the truth, old fellow, we have been looking for you for a couple of days!"

"I've been looking for you longer than that!" replied Mr. Havens.

"Well," Redfern said with a leer, "it seems that we have both met our heart's desire. How are your friends?"

"Sound asleep and perfectly happy," replied the millionaire.

"You mean that they were asleep when you left them."

"Certainly!"

"Fearful that they might oversleep themselves," Redfern went on, "I sent my friends to awake them. They may be here at any moment now. I expect to hold quite a reception to-night."

Laying his automatic down on the floor, Havens walked deliberately to a great easy-chair which stood not far away and sat down. No one would judge from the manner of the man that he was not resting himself in one of his own cosy rooms at his New York hotel. Sam was not slow in following the example of his employer. Redfern frowned slightly at the nonchalance of the man.

"You make yourself at home!" he said.

"I have a notion," replied Mr. Havens, "that I paid for most of this furniture. I think I have a right to use it."

"Look here, Havens," Redfern said, "you have no possible show of getting out of this place alive unless you come to terms with me."

"From the lips of any other man in the world I might believe the statement," Mr. Havens replied. "But you, Redfern, have proven yourself to be such a consummate liar that I don't believe a word you say."

"Then you're not open to compromise?"

Havens shook his head.

There was now a sound of voices in what seemed to be a corridor back of the great apartment, and in

a moment Glenn and Carl were pushed into the room, their wrists bound tightly together, their eyes blinking under the strong electric light. Both boys were almst sobbing with rage and shame.

"They jumped on us while we were asleep!" cried Carl.

Redfern went to the back of the room and looked out into the passage.

"Where are the others?" he asked of some one who was not in sight.

"These boys were the only ones remaining in camp," was the reply.

"Redfern," said Havens, as coolly as if he had been sitting at his own desk in the office of the Invincible Trust Company, "will you tell me how you managed to get these boys here so quickly?"

"Not the slightest objection in the world," was the reply. "There is a secret stairway up the cliff. You took a long way to get here in that clumsy old machine."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Havens.

"Now, if you don't mind," Redfern said, "we'll introduce you to your new quarters. They are not as luxurious as those you occupy in New York, but I imagine they will serve your purpose until you are ready to come to terms."

He pointed toward the two prisoners, and the men by his side advanced with cords in their hands.

Havens extended his wrists with a smile on his face and Sam did likewise.

"You're good sports," cried Redfern. "It's a pity we can't come to terms!"

"Never mind that!" replied Havens. "Go on with your program."

Redfern walked back to the corridor and the prisoners heard him dismissing some one for the night.

"You may go to bed now," he said. "Your work has been well done. The two men with me will care for the prisoners."

The party passed down a stone corridor to the door of a room which had evidently been used as a fortress dungeon in times past. Redfern turned a great key in the lock and motioned the prisoners inside.

At that moment he stood facing the prisoners with the two others at his sides, all looking inquiringly into the faces of those who were taking their defeat so easily.

As Redfern swung his hand toward the open door he felt something cold pressing against his neck. He turned about to face an automatic revolver held in the hands of Ben Whitcomb! His two accomplices moved forward a pace in defense, but drew back when they saw the automatic in Jimmie's hand within a foot of their breasts.

"And now," said Mr. Havens, as coolly as if the

situation was being put on in a New York parlor, "you three men will please step inside."

"I'm a game loser, too!" exclaimed Redfern.

In a moment the door was closed and locked and the cords were cut from the hands of the four prisoners.

"Good!" said Jimmie. "I don't know what you fellows would do without me. I'm always getting you out of scrapes!"

What was said after that need not be repeated here. It is enough to say that Mr. Havens thoroughly appreciated the service which had been rendered.

"The game is played to the end, boys," he said in a moment. "The only thing that remains to be done is to get Redfern down the secret stairway to the machines. The others we care nothing about."

"I know where that secret stairway is," Ben said. "While we were sneaking around here in the darkness, a fellow came climbing up the stairs, grunting as though he had reached the top of the Washington monument."

"Where were the others put to bed?" asked Sam. "We heard Redfern dismiss them for the night. Did you see where they went?"

"Sure!" replied Jimmie. "They're in a room opening from this corridor a little farther down."

Mr. Havens took the key from the lock of the door before him and handed it to Jimmie.

"See if you can lock them in with this," he said.

The boy returned in a moment with a grin on his face.

"They are locked in!" he said.

"Are there any others here?" asked Havens.

Jimmie shook his head.

"They all go away at night," he declared, "after they turn out the ghost lights. Redfern it seems keeps only those two with him for company. Their friends will unlock them in the morning."

Mr. Havens opened the door and called out to Redfern, who immediately appeared in the opening.

"Seach his pockets and tie his hands," the millionaire said, turning to Sam. "You know what this means, Redfern?" he added to the prisoner.

"It means Sing Sing," was the sullen reply, "but there are plenty of others who will keep me company."

"That's the idea!" cried Havens. "That's just why I came here! I want the officials of the new trust company more than I want you."

"You'll get them if I have my way about it!" was the reply.

An hour later the *Ann* and the *Louise* dropped down in the green valley by the camp-fire. Redfern was sullen at first, but before the start which was made soon after sunrise he related to Havens the complete story of his embezzlement and his accomplices. He told of the schemes which had been re-

sorted to by the officials of the new trust company to keep him out of the United States, and to keep Havens from reaching him.

The Flying Machine Boys parted with Havens at Quito, the millionaire aviator going straight to Panama with his prisoner, while the boys camped and hunted and fished in the Andes for two weeks before returning to New York.

It had been the intention of the lads to bring Doran and some of the others at Quito to punishment, but it was finally decided that the victory had been so complete that they could afford to forgive their minor enemies. They had been only pawns in the hands of a great corporation.

"The one fake thing about this whole proposition," Jimmie said as the boys landed in New York, sunburned and happy, "is that alleged Mystery of the Andes! It was too commonplace—just a dynamo in a subterranean mountain stream, and electric lights! Say," he added, with one of his inimitable grins, "electricity makes pretty good ghost lights, though!"

"Redfern revealed his residence by trying to conceal it!" declared Ben. "That is the usual way. Still," he went on, "the Mystery was some mystery for a long time! It must have cost a lot to set the stage for it."

The next day Mr. Havens called to visit the boys at their hotel.

"While you were loafing in the mountains," he said, after greetings had been exchanged, "the murderer of Hubbard confessed and was sentenced to die in the electric chair. Redfern and half a dozen directors of the new trust company have been given long sentences at Sing Sing."

"There are associates that ought to go, too!" Jimmie cried.

"We're not going to prosecute them," Mr. Havens answered. "But this is not to the point. The Federal Government wants you boys to undertake a little mission for the Secret Service men. You see," he went on, "you boys made quite a hit in that Peruvian job."

"Will Sam go?" asked Ben.

"Sam is Sam no longer," replied Mr. Havens, with a laugh. "He is now Warren P. King, son of the banker! What do you think of that?"

"Then what was he doing playing the tramp?" asked Carl.

"Oh, he quarreled with his father, and it was the old story, but it is all smooth sailing for him now. He may go with you, but his father naturally wants him at home for a spell."

"Where are we to go?" asked Ben.

"I'll tell you that later," was the reply. "Will you go?"

The boys danced around the room and declared

that they were ready to start that moment. The story of their adventures on the trip will be found in the next volume of this series, entitled:

"The Flying Machine Boys on Secret Service; or, the Capture in the Air!"

THE END.